

Renate Welsh

*Constanze Mozart: Eine unbedeutende Frau*

[Jugend und Volk Verlag, Vienna; 1990]

An Introduction to the Book, by Bruce Cooper Clarke

I.

Constanze Weber was the third of four sisters. In the family, money was always short. Her father, well-meaning and ineffectual, never seemed to get ahead, despite the hectoring of a demanding and erratic wife. The Webers were living in Mannheim in 1777 when Wolfgang Mozart and his mother paused there for some months on their way, ultimately, to Paris. Constanze was 15 years old when she first met him as he came courting her older sister. They met again in Vienna; the father had died, the sister was married to another, and she was 19. A year later, she and Mozart married. When death took him suddenly in 1791, they had been married for 112 months; in that time, she had been pregnant 54 months, had given birth to six children and buried four of them in infancy. When Mozart died, she was 29 years of age, with two sons, one seven years old, the other five months. And money was short.

II.

Until she emerges as the Widow Mozart, a personality in her own right, there is relatively little that we know directly of Constanze Weber Mozart herself. What we do know is what is said of her by others, principally Mozart himself, and to a lesser extent, his father. Virtually all of the letters that she is known to have written while Mozart was still alive (because they are mentioned in letters that survived) have disappeared. We see her -- and her relationship with him -- in the mirror his letters provide us. We catch glimpses of her in things written by her father-in-law Leopold Mozart and others. But Constanze's own voice, speaking out of the immediacy of her life with Wolfgang Mozart, is almost totally silent.

And yet right from the start, after Mozart had died, biographers wanting to document the life of the composer of "Don Giovanni" and "Die Zauberflöte" were eager to know something of the woman he had shared the last decade of his life with. Who was she? What was she like? What role did she play in Mozart's life? Was she important to him as a composer and to what he composed?

Looking back on two hundred years of Mozart biography, it is possible to discern three basic schools of thought concerning these questions, three fundamentally different approaches to their answers, given the nature of the sources.

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*Author's note: This Introduction was written in late 1990, soon after the book was published in Vienna, Austria. In 1997, the book was published in English-language translation as Constanze Mozart – An Unimportant Woman (Ariadne Press, Riverside, CA. ISBN number 0-57241-036-1.); the translation is by Beth Bjorklund.*

*At pages 23-4, you will find an Index to the introductory pages and an Index to the Footnotes contained in the excerpts.*

One school looks on the questions as non-questions: what does it matter who Constanze Mozart was, what her personal characteristics were, whether she was musically adept or not? Mozart would have accomplished what he did whether he had been married to George Sand or Clara Schumann or, for that matter, Alma Mahler. The alumni of this school are few.

Until relatively recently, the preponderant body of opinion regarding Constanze Mozart was essentially negative. For years, Mozart biographers tended to side with what they took to be "the family view" (meaning Leopold's) of Constanze and to see her as unworthy to have been the wife of the greatest musical genius the world has ever known. Two other historical circumstances, largely legacies of 19th century thought, helped shape this attitude: the emergence of the now-repudiated view of Mozart as a poverty-ridden genius done in by a cold and hostile world, and the fascination of the 19th century with the myth of "the potter's field burial." In each case, responsibility came more and more to be laid at Constanze's feet.

Writing early in the 20th century, the German biographer Arthur Schurig could see in Constanze nothing but "a primitive person, uneducated and unsophisticated. . .moody, dissatisfied, flirtatious, and jealous." A later biographer, Erich Blom, wrote: "Between the two partners there was a certain degree of mutual understanding and in that respect one could regard the marriage as happy, but a deeper bond in this union is inconceivable." The celebrated Mozart musicologist Alfred Einstein, in the biographical preamble to his book on Mozart's music published in 1945, wrinkled his nose at "the whole dreary story of Mozart's marriage."

It remained for the German author Wolfgang Hildesheimer to summarize the credo of this school in a book published in the 1970s:

". . .It seems improbable that she ever suffered mental torment, and even her physical sufferings seem primarily to be an excuse for her visits to spas. Constanze had a lighthearted instinctual nature; she granted Mozart (and perhaps not only him) erotic, or at least sexual, satisfaction. . . .Constanze was not a real singer, and not a musician at all. . . . Although she lived to experience Mozart's fame, to enjoy the financial benefits (doing her best to augment them) , she never had a real understanding of her husband's greatness. . . .And herein lies one explanation for the eight years of their more or less happy married life, despite some faltering: it was rooted in the earth of erotic understanding. Without doubt, Mozart suffered more than she did from these separations; Constanze was better able than he to find erotic substitutes when he was on his journeys. . . .We think that Constanze cannot have been too concerned [about Mozart alone in Vienna while she was in Baden], for Mozart was not ill, and anyways, she never was too concerned about what was going on in his mind. . . .It is possible (let us be cautious) that she was having a love affair with Süßmayr. . ." (*Translation by Marion Faber*)

But views were starting to change, as evidenced in a three-sentence quotation from the British musicologist Arthur Hutchings writing in 1948: "Why did he marry at all unless he could find something more worthy of his genius than Constanze? (Or is that too hard on Constanze? Perhaps she was a greater woman than we know.)" No such parenthetical second-thoughts would have occurred to Hildesheimer and many before him.

And indeed, a school of thought more positively (or at least less negatively) inclined toward an appreciation of Constanze Mozart has lately begun to make its views known. Actually, however, as long ago as 1798 one could

have read the following, written by Mozart's second biographer, and the only one who had known Constanze personally:

"Mozart enjoyed a happy existence in his marriage with Constanze Weber. He found a good and loving wife in her, one who was able to suit herself to his temperament and thus win his total confidence and an influence that she only brought into play to keep him from doing anything rash. He loved her deeply and confided everything, even his petty sins, in her -- and she replied in kind with tenderness and loving care." 1/

The fact that Constanze had helped Niemetschek to write his biography of Mozart made his view of their marriage suspect in the eyes of later biographers. How much more congenial was the view written, they thought, by Mozart's sister Nannerl some six months after his death:

". . .he. . .married a girl not suited for him against the will of his father, and that's why there was such domestic disorder when he died and afterwards."

As it turns out, this almost certainly was not written by Nannerl but rather by a Salzburg priest who was serving as the intermediary between Nannerl and a German academic who was assembling information in 1792 for an obituary of Mozart. 2/ (It is interesting to reflect on how Niemetschek's view of the marriage, drawing on his contact with Constanze, lost favor and the view attributed to Mozart's sister gained currency, as though anything Constanze might say was prejudiced --- and therefore readily dismissed -- but anything Nannerl might have said was not.)

Even Arthur Schurig, cited above, later came to feel that perhaps a slight apology was due Constanze. He tried, but his heart was not in it. He wrote: "*Man hat ihr unrecht getan. Eine bedeutende Frau war sie nicht. . . . Eines darf nicht vergessen werden: ihren beiden Söhnen war sie eine gar treffliche Mutter.*" ("We have done her an injustice. She was a woman of no importance of course. . . .But one thing should not be forgotten: she was an excellent mother to her two sons.")

In his book, "1791: Mozart's Last Year," American musicologist Robbins Landon found the historical tables unjustifiably tilted against Constanze and he devoted an entire chapter to her "vindication." In doing so, he drew on the biography, "Mozart in Wien," published in 1986 by the German music historian, Volkmar Braunbehrens.

Given his focus on Mozart's years in Vienna, Braunbehrens necessarily had to undertake a critical reexamination of the role Constanze played in Mozart's life from the time he arrived there in March 1781 (in early May, he took a room in the lodgings offered by Constanze's now-widowed mother) until he died in 1791. Braunbehrens examined not only the letters of the Mozart family, but the personal circumstances of Mozart and his wife and the broader historical circumstances affecting all those living in Vienna at the time. He writes:

". . .Constanze Mozart had indeed other standards for judging, such as her affection for Mozart, the love of music that she undoubtedly had (one that did not emerge only with the exchange of letters with music

1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

2. See the author's analysis, "Albert von Mölk: Mozart Myth-Maker?", *Mozart-Jahrbuch 1995*, Salzburg 1995, p.155ff. This study is also to be found here in the papers present in Group 2 of the website.

publishers after Mozart died), and her readiness to go along with an unconventional existence in connection with the theater, with musicians, in short, the life of an artist. . . . To all appearances, the marriage was a very affectionate one. Mozart constantly wanted to have his wife nearby, liked to have her talk to him as he was composing, regarded her as an essential part of his life.

. . . [During their married life] Mozart undertook only two trips without his wife, to Berlin and to Frankfurt am Main. Each time he was gone some seven or eight weeks. And despite all the various and unusual impressions and diversions of the journeys, Mozart felt the separation from his wife as a painful burden. . . . We are especially indebted to her that so much of what remained unpublished during Mozart's lifetime -- in particular those works that were never finished -- were ultimately passed on in reliable editions and that the autographs for so many works were preserved. . . . Mozart's widow kept a close eye on the accuracy of the scores and, when doubt arose, was prepared to dispense with publication rather than let something appear with Mozart's name on it that was not authentic."

And Braunbehrens concludes:

"If we confine ourselves to the little that is known of Constanze Mozart out of the time of her marriage and if we frankly acknowledge that that little hardly suffices to furnish us a comprehensive picture of her personality, then there is not the slightest reason for any kind of a negative judgment."

### III.

Like the question of Mozart's last illness and unexpected death, the question of Constanze's relationship with Mozart is probably fated to be with us forever. The subject is simply too fascinating and the sources are too enigmatic and inviting to think that it can be systematically investigated and definitively settled, once and for all. It is the very nature of the sources (or lack of them) and of the questions themselves that allows every observer to project his or her view of the rightness of things on them and propose yet another interpretation.

So far as Constanze Mozart is concerned, whatever view one may wish to carry regarding her and the quality of her marriage with Mozart, this much is beyond question: It was in the course of their married life, nine years with but few separations, that Mozart composed "Figaro," "Così fan tutte," and "Die Zauberflöte," the extended series of great piano concertos, five great symphonies, the celebrated ten string quartets, such string quintets as the C major and the G minor, the late piano works, innumerable concert arias and songs, and the C-minor mass, the Ave verum corpus, and the Requiem. Virtually the entire body of that part of his work that goes under the rubric of "the mature Mozart" was composed while Mozart and Constanze were together as man and wife.

### IV.

Who was Constanze Mozart? What was she like? What was the true nature of her relationship to Mozart and to his music? If we could hear her voice, what would she say?

Early in 1990, Renate Welsh published a book entitled "Constanze Mozart -- Eine unbedeutende Frau." Frau Welsh is not a Mozart scholar as such, although it is clear that she is deeply read in the biographical record of the Mozart family. (It seems certain that the subtitle to her book -- "A woman of no importance" -- is taken from the Schurig quote given above, but she never tells

the reader that.) Frau Welsh is a writer of fiction, widely known in Austria and critically acclaimed. Most important perhaps, Frau Welsh is a woman -- and not just one more man trying to deal with the mystery of Constanze Mozart.

The book is not long -- some 115 pages of basic text in a slightly smaller-than-normal hardcover format. There follow some ten pages of footnotes, consisting mostly of rather brief entries identifying persons mentioned in the narrative. (NB: The footnotes to the extracts that follow are identified with their original numbers and are given at the end of this paper.) The reason for relegating the identification of individuals to the footnotes lies in Frau Welsh's approach to her narrative: the setting is Salzburg, the time is the fall of 1841, around the first of the month of October. Observing the classical unity of time, the action (if that is the right word) takes place in a 24-hour period from one morning to the next. The story is told partly in dialogue between Constanze, now 79 years old, and her sister Sophie (some five years younger, who came to Salzburg to live with her when Sophie's husband died). Mostly, however, the story unfolds in Constanze's musings and meditations as her mind goes back over the events of her life. In such a style, there is no place for pausing to tell the reader who Dittersdorf is, for example.

This Introduction to the book consists primarily of extended extracts in my translation. There are no chapters as such in the book, although there are places where the narrative obviously breaks, to be resumed at a somewhat later point in the temporal scheme. The opening and closing sections are included in their entirety; they bracket selected passages of various lengths as the book progresses. All selections are given in the order in which they appear. I hope thereby to have achieved a certain continuity in presenting Frau Welsh's imaginative reconstruction of Constanze Mozart's voice. There is, of course, much more to the book's portrait of Constanze Mozart than can possibly be presented in the limited compass of this Introduction.

## V.

*(The book opens with the following all by itself on the page after the title page.)*

Constanze von Nissen,  
 formerly the Widow Mozart,  
 fifty years after Mozart's death,  
 as her own long life  
 was drawing to a close. . .

Let us imagine:

*(Then the opening section sets the scene and introduces the reader to the play between the sisters and the Salzburg setting, to the alternation between exterior and interior dialogue, and to Constanze's remembering back. Her thoughts turn to "Herr Vizekapellmeister" -- Mozart's father Leopold -- and to Raimund, her first-born, as she gazes out the window on the place in the Michaelisplatz where Mozart's statue one day will stand.)*

An old woman peered out at the rain. Heavy drops drummed down on the paving stones, raising bubbles that burst and splattered. The broad public square was deserted.

The monument would stand there, in the middle.

If things had only worked the way they should, it would be standing there now. But that Roman mosaic turned up. They would have to find it right there, of all places. When they were digging the foundation. What business did the Roman mosaic have being here? As if there weren't old rocks enough scattered around the world.

The statue had been cast at the Royal Foundry in Munich in May. With Her Royal Highness the Archduchess Sophie and many others in attendance. Constanze herself had not yet seen the statue. Naturally, you could do that to someone born a Weber.

The middle of the square was all torn up. It looked like someone had driven a plow through it. They were certainly going at the work as if they had all the time in the world. If they didn't hurry up, it would be too late. Too late for her.

Days came often now when she felt the chills creeping up in her bones and nothing helped, neither extra covers, nor a bed-warmer full of glowing coals, no amount of warm shawls or hot tea, nothing. When it was raining as it was today that was hardly surprising. But it happened too on days when the city lay baking in the sun. Then, along with the chills came dread, a kind of choking fear. And even praying didn't help.

"Sophie!" 1/

Her sister didn't answer. As usual, not listening. She didn't believe that Sophie really heard worse than she did. Most of the time she was simply being lazy. The spoiled last child, the "baby." And she had every reason to be glad of that.

"Sophie!!"

The answer was not to be understood. From somewhere in one of the back rooms came the sound of dragging steps.

At least she could pick up her feet when she walked.

Now Sophie stood there, her face to the window. How many wrinkles she had. Loose, creased skin on hollow cheeks.

"Just look at that down there, Sophie. As usual, not a soul working."

"But it's pouring."

"They don't even work when the sun is shining."

"They were working yesterday."

"If they don't hurry up, it will be too late."

"How you talk. Well, but now it's time to eat."

"You don't think about anything except eating."

"Someone has to think about it."

"Is the rain stopping?"

"Could be stopping. Such a cloudburst doesn't last long. Luise 2/ wants the afternoon off. It's her mother's name-day."

"She often has name-day."

"The last time it was her sister and that was four months ago or maybe five."

"Carl 3/ ought to be writing again."

"Would you like some camomile tea?"

"I'd rather have coffee."

"Now? Before we eat?"

"Yes, now, before we eat."

What a reproach in the way she left all bent over. Well, a cup of coffee was really not too much to ask. Sophie acts as though she had to pay for it.

Constanze leaned back. The times when she had to turn every penny over three times were gone. She could afford more coffee now than she could ever drink in the days she had left.

Her glance wandered through the room and came to rest on the pattern of inlaid wood on the chest of drawers. Pretty, how one scroll ran into another. A lovely piece, a really lovely piece of furniture. But Luise must wax it again with beeswax. And this time polish it properly. Wood dries out and gets scratches and hairline cracks.

"Yes," she murmured, "you would be amazed, wouldn't you, Herr Vizekapellmeister, to see how I live now." With a view on this square to its farthest reaches and not just on the narrow confines of the Getreidegasse.

"What did you say?" called Sophie from the kitchen.

"Nothing."

"But you did say something."

"No."

It was none of her affair. That was a matter between her and her father-in-law, Johann Georg Leopold Mozart. 4/ Dearest, best Father. Très cher Père. The Papa who "comes right after God."

For whom she was never good enough. He ought to see her now. She, a mere Weber.

On that first visit to Salzburg, he had given her nothing, not a single thing. No ring, no snuff-box, no purse, no clasp to wear at the waist, not even a pin. He had shown her the keepsakes that "his Wolferl" had received as a Wunderkind. Those that had not been sold to help cover travel costs, that is. And he had shown her the pictures and the miniatures. But never once did he say, "As his wife, you should also have one of these gifts." It was as though the things all belonged to him, the father. And he ran on about the sacrifices he had

made to bring up the children. Even Mozart was hurt by this, but did he utter a word, O no, nothing against Herr Papa.

And when they got back home in Vienna, that summer of 1783, dear little Raimundl 5/ was dead and buried.

Raimund had been the most difficult of all the children and his birth had taken the most out of her. Mozart kept coming into the bedroom to stroke her face wet with sweat, his eyes full of tears, until finally the midwife threw him out. Once the baby was born, Mozart had taken him in his arms and danced around with him, and the midwife had scolded and thrown up her hands at such foolishness.

What did Raimund look like?

Was he the one with so much dark hair? Or was that Johannes 6/, the third one? Two months, one month -- their lives were so short. How could she be expected to remember when the next pregnancy came so soon again, and with it the swollen legs, the heavy feeling in all her bones, and the fatigue.

"There's your coffee."

"Aren't you having some?"

"I'm busy."

"Of course you are."

Constanze took the cup, inhaled the aroma. A sparrow lit on the windowsill, chirped and shook itself.

Constanze grasped the armrests of her chair with both hands, pressed hard, went limp, then once more shifted as much of her weight as she could to her hands and heaved herself up.

Her legs held. Success. She reached for the cane leaning against the table. There was a good feeling to the knob, round and solid.

Moving slowly through the room, her glance fell on the mirror. The face in it was that of a stranger.

That hair on her chin -- a long, black hair -- where did that come from? Her mother had had hairs like that on her face.

She pinched the hair between the nails of her thumb and index finger and pulled, but she couldn't hang on to it. She tried again and again, the thumbnail boring into the pad of her index finger and leaving a red crescent in the flesh. She grew impatient, angry.

She did not want to ask Sophie to pull out the hair. Even if Sophie did not say it, she was sure to think "just like our blessed Mother." There! A short, stabbing pain. She held the hair in her hand, rolled it into a ball and flicked it away, and was immediately annoyed that she did. She should have burned it. But if she were to look for it on the floor now, Sophie would be certain to come in and never have done with her questions. And anyways, why should she care about a hair?

Outside, a pick clanked on a stone. The workers were back. And Luise brought in the soup.

## VI.

*(Once lunch is over, Constanze reads through old letters from Mozart and her sons. Afterwards, she and Sophie leave for a walk through the Getreidegasse, across the river, up the Linzer Gasse to the Sebastianfriedhof where Constanze's second husband, Georg Nicolaus von Nissen 8/ (and her father-in-law!), lays buried in the family vault.)*

People had accused her of putting the two little ones on show just to make money. Easy enough for them to say. Well, what was she supposed to do in those days, with all those debts and that tiny alms-pension, with two small children and not a soul in the world she could hold on to before Nissen came into her life? But of course, no one had given the slightest thought to reproaching the old Mozart for traipsing around half the world with his two children. Him, 0 no. But her--!

Unbelievable, all the things people chalked up against her, directly or indirectly, often as a side-slap in a piece written to honor the genius of Mozart.

But she had not married a genius.

She had married a small, slender man who made her laugh, and God knows there had been little enough in her life to laugh about until that day when the newly discharged court organist and concertmaster to the Archbishop of Salzburg, one Wolfgang Mozart, had rented a room from her mother. The musician who couldn't sit still for a minute, whose fingers played on every flat surface, every plate, every cushion as though it were a silent piano, who talked with his hands, who loved to twist words and spellings around and make faces, and who you never knew next what he would be up to. He was no fairytale prince, this pale person with the slightly yellow pallor. She had fancied rather a different man for her life, taller, more distinguished, someone you could make a show of and be envied by others, who would raise her out of her lot, the quarreling and the eternal shortage of money, who would tell her that she, and only she -- not Aloysia 9/, the older sister -- was the loveliest, the most talented, over and over again until she began to believe it herself. But there was Mozart, they had laughed together and been silly together, and somehow too there was a touch of compassion left over from the time when Aloysia had treated him so shabbily in Mannheim, no, that was in Munich of course, Aloysia intoxicated with her first success as primadonna, Mozart with the black mourning threads on the golden buttons of his red cloak after his mother's death. Her sister had been heartless, with thought only for what would be most advantageous for her and her career, and then, years later, when it hit her what she had passed up, she had had the gall to claim that his whole life long Mozart had never loved anyone but her. What she thought she knew! She didn't know a thing.

Constanze felt around for her little gold watch, the watch she had received from Mozart when they married. She breathed on a spot of tarnish, rubbed it clear on her dress, and held the watch between the palms of her hands.

She had liked his music, but she had fallen in love with the man who joked with her. Just when their affection for one another began was something that even now she couldn't really say. It came quite imperceptibly, a laughing, chuckling, giggling delight in each other, devoid of lovesickness or deep-breathing anxiety, something that might never have turned into love at all if her mother hadn't interfered with her scenes and commands. Her mother, who after the third glass of wine would let her hair fly loose and shout at the top of her voice.

Constanze made the sign of the cross.

One should not speak ill of the dead. Nor think ill. But it was true. For weeks, her mother had looked on favorably, had allowed her daughter to visit Mozart alone in his room, had stayed at home when they went walking with Sophie, and sent Constanze to Mozart with a cup of coffee or a glass of lemonade, had laughed at his jokes and sided with him in his tirades against the Archbishop 10/, and then all of a sudden, from one day to the next, he was a rotter, a ne'er-do-well, a seducer, and she had raged and stormed. The situation in the apartment in the "Auge Gottes" on St. Peter's square went from bad to worse, almost every night Constanze had cried herself to sleep. In a letter to his son, Leopold Mozart had called her mother a "corrupter of youth," had written that she should have a sign hung around her neck, be put in chains and made to sweep the streets. She, along with old Thorwart 11/, the guardian, that loathsome schemer. But this was a letter she only happened to see much, much later. What if she had known of it at the time?

The difficulties in fact served to bring her and Mozart closer together; had it been the opposition that had caused affection to turn into love? It was too late then to retreat, for Mozart had long before made his home in her heart, for then she knew how his urgent tenderness swept through her. She got gooseflesh all over, even where no one could get gooseflesh, and she felt her blood pound in her ears and her breasts.

## VII.

*(Constanze and Sophie sit in the afternoon sun at the cemetery as the talk turns to memories of Mozart's death. From there, Constanze goes in thought to Mozart, to the soprano Josefa Duscek for whom Mozart wrote concert arias, and to her former poverty and her present affluence.)*

It was in those days that she began to dream about Mozart. He was never immediately present, had just left the room, the quill pen still quivering in the inkwell because he had let the door slam shut behind him, or he was expected back any minute.

"On the fiftieth anniversary, I'll have a solemn mass said for him in the cathedral," Constanze said, "I'd like it best if Wowi Z/ would conduct the Requiem again."

Sophie nodded. "I get shivers down my spine when I just think about the Requiem."

"Of course, we know now that it was only the servant of Count Wallsegg 25".

Naturally she knew that it was Count Wallsegg who had commissioned the Requiem and who planned to pass it off as his own, Sophie said, but that really doesn't explain anything, Constanze herself had said how she shivered when she suddenly saw that grey man standing there as they were about to leave for Prague, maybe it really was just the servant, or maybe it was someone who had taken his shape, how could you tell?

She pulled her shawl tighter around her. Towards the end, she had herself experienced something that was hard to explain, something she had once written to Constanze and her dear, good husband, the best brother-in-law one could have.

Constanze nodded and said she remembered exactly, but Sophie was not to be stopped. All morning, she said, she had been thinking about that very day,

she can still see every thing so clearly, no, even clearer, as if she were even now running down the Rauhensteingasse. She can see every stone in the street, the cat who disappeared around the corner as she came, the young man from the bakery with the bread-basket on his back, and that worn-down place on the fifth step.

"It was the fourth."

No, it was the fifth, she was sure of that because she slipped and had to catch hold of the railing, and then she turned to look and thought, that could have been a terrible fall down those five stone steps.

Constanze did not contradict her, which caused Sophie to look at her with some concern. "Are you cold? Do you want to go home now?"

No, that she did not want. The slanting rays of the sun cast bright lines across the grass. A swarm of birds flew over the cemetery, she had no idea what kind of birds they were, would have liked to know although such things had never interested her before. Sophie talked on and on. How she had run, was out of breath when she reached the apartment, and then had stood before the door, not daring to knock for fear of what she would find inside. After the experience with the light, all hope had gone out of her. But Constanze must understand why she had waited so many years to tell her about it, she had been worried that it would upset her sister once more, she had been out of her senses when she threw herself on the dead body, and Wowi had been shrieking in his little bed and it was like she was deaf, blind and deaf.

The 4th and 5th of December 1791 were gone, utterly extinguished, from Constanze's memory, and the next day too. She had to depend on what others told her, especially Sophie, but they must have it wrong, it must have been different, at least in some of the details, because Sophie maintained as confidently as others did that on the day after Mozart's death crowds of people came by to weep and cry over Mozart. But Constanze knew for certain that there was nothing of the kind, she even believed it had been part of her agony and despair just how few there were to grieve with her.

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It's true she had been jealous of Josefa Duschek 27/ in a way she had never been over the young actresses and chambermaids that Mozart like to clown around with. Josefa Duschek, the pretty, self-assured, successful lady for whom he had written "Bella mia fiamma" and "Ah, lo previdi." Alongside Josefa Duschek most other women seemed insipid. A kind of universal acclaim seemed to accompany her, as though she stood stage center in every gathering.

Actually, Constanze thought, I should be grateful to her. She did a great deal for us, for Mozart, for the boys, she was always most gracious to me.

When a woman stood in the center of the stage, even if this stage was just the front room, there was a beauty to her no matter what she looked like. Even Cavalieri 28/, who was really ugly, everyone knew how ugly she was, even with her it was believable that two men were ardently yearning for her when she was present on the stage in the role of Konstanze. Strange.

Acclaim, applause was a powerful beauty potion, better than all the powders and paints and dyes. And not only for women. In Prague celebrating his triumph with "Figaro," Mozart had been somehow taller, someone you shook the hand of and didn't just clap on the shoulder.

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Niemetschek 33/, the good soul who had taken Wowi to him like a son, had been fair and proper in his judgment of Mozart, and of her too. But generally speaking, biographers were a plague, all they wanted was to live on his fame and take care of themselves in the process. Feuerstein 34/ too, the one she had sought out herself to complete the biography Nissen had started. How many letters she had written him, how much she had spent on postage, so much time and trouble and money, and all for nothing. He never even answered, the lout. As for the publisher, he only wanted to pocket the money and pay nothing out, and after Nissen died, they all thought they could make light of me. But they were wrong. They probably thought she is just the little Constanze, feather-brained and naive. That's all they knew. She had taught them a thing or two. Now they called her greedy, especially André 35/, who truly got the best deal of all when she sold him the original music autographs. She ought to have asked a lot more. Bad enough that they played "Don Giovanni" from Augsburg to St. Petersburg, from Brunn to Buenos Aires, from Neustrelitz and Weimar to Stralsund and Reval, and she never got one penny for it. And not only her: in the last year of his life, Mozart's operas played all over Europe -- and he, he had to write letters pleading for money.

But she wasn't poor anymore. Thanks be to God. And if it wasn't ladylike of her to safeguard her own interests, why, then she was unladylike. She thrust her lower lip out defiantly and laughed to herself. Someone born a Weber, the daughter of Fridolin Weber 36/, who received 200 gulden a year as bass singer, copyist, and souffleur and had to support a wife and five children on that, couldn't afford to be elegant. She knew all too well what it was like to have no money, to feel panic when there was a knock at the door lest it be a creditor standing outside or the landlord wanting to collect his rent. She knew too well how bitter poverty tasted, how viciously quarrels could erupt over a single penny, she knew too how degrading it was as a child to be sent to the store without any money and to have to put up with caustic remarks in the hope that, having swallowed them, you would finally get the pack of coffee or sugar. Today certainly she was not badly off. But that didn't mean she didn't have to be careful. Now as before, she had to see to it that no one cheated her, that she got what was coming to her.

## VIII.

*(Back home in the apartment on the Michaelisplatz now, Constanze is alone in her room as Sophie prepares supper. Constanze's thoughts go from Nissen to Nannerl, Mozart's sister who married Johann Baptist Berchtold zu Sonnenburg in 1784 and left Salzburg to live in St. Gilgen, returning to live out her life in Salzburg once her husband had died.)*

Constanze settled herself in her chair and nodded to the picture of Nissen. Poised and serious in his red uniform, he returned her gaze. The high collar fitted him and fitted to him. He never lost his composure, even when Copenhagen was besieged and under fire from a thousand cannon. Often he seemed to her like a teacher, a strict but fair and concerned teacher. She did indeed have much to thank him for. From him and, at his side, from others, she had come to know respect, to feel she was being taken seriously. He was the kind of man one turned to for advice, whose advice she also readily adopted, one for whom servants opened the door without being asked, one to whom the innkeeper's wife always gave the best room and for whom she laid out a clean tablecloth. She had enjoyed all this of course, but more than anything else, his considerateness. He had realized how keenly she was looking for some gesture from Carl and he had quietly suggested to him that he should send her a

wedding present. She only learned about it later by chance. Dear, good Nicolaus. Even his embraces were gentle and full of caring. She had never seen him disconcerted.

You should have had a man like that, Constanze said to the portrait of her sister-in-law. If you had, perhaps you wouldn't have turned so sour. How sober you look, sitting there with your elegant hairdo. You don't look very happy, with those pinched lips, old-maidish. Or disillusioned? You certainly had reason enough to be, Maria Anna Mozart. Always having to be the proper daughter, that was no fun, and you never protested. You properly did what was expected of you when your father asked you to, and when you would once start to improvise, that was already something pretty "daring." You were not permitted to marry the man you loved because he had no means, and the husband you got was forbidding and ill-tempered, with five youngsters from two previous marriages who didn't want you and drove you crazy. You buried two children of your own, of course Johanna was already six, at least you knew her, knew how she laughed, how she talked, had protected her from the bigger ones, had made plans for her, and then -- gone. I feel so sorry for you when I think about you today. What did you really have from life? First came the triumphs, the glittering salons with the candles and crystal and golden mirrors, the ladies and gentlemen in their finery who applauded you, who admired you, even if somewhat less than they did your brother, after all you were older, a twelve-year-old can't expect to be taken on the lap of Her Royal Majesty and smothered with kisses. But from that point on, it was all downhill, sometimes slower, sometimes faster, until you lay, a wraith, in bed and could hardly lift a hand, bed-ridden, blind and helpless. And the ever-lasting headaches, feeling so sick you wanted to throw up, days passed in a darkened room and only the stern Papa for company. He loved you, most certainly he loved you, perhaps even more than his son, but you were only a daughter, you know, and not his hope for lasting renown, and even the most perfect daughter in the world, and you were surely that, is in the end just a daughter.

I would so much like to have been friends with you, Nannerl, because you were Mozart's sister, because I wanted to belong, finally be accepted someplace, not have to be ashamed, not have to plead silently for forgiveness for the mess in the room, for my mother's recriminations, for the shabbiness, for the threadbare coverings on the chairs, the spots on the tablecloth, Father's worn-out coat sleeves, his sheepish ways, the drinking glasses with the broken rims. I was always to one side, you stood unquestioned in the center, at least that's how I saw you and envied you, that's why I sewed the bonnets for you and embroidered the ribbons and bought you a heart-and-arrow brooch, it wasn't worth much of course, but it was still more than I could afford. I didn't know about the set-backs, about your disillusionment, how the world began to swim until it crashed in headaches, I never had headaches, at least not like that. I only felt your disapproval and rejection, your indifference, I didn't waste any thought on why, and then when I once began to understand, it was too late, you were set in your ways, and my feeling for you would only have annoyed you if you had known about it. You were beyond my reach, do you understand? And you hurt me right from the start, even the way you walked through a room made me feel small and unimportant. You were so positive, so firm in your views, so lacking in well or maybe. Or was I wrong? I know you were pleased when Wowi came to visit you and held your hand, that hand which could hold nothing anymore. You loved your brother, I knew that. Why was it then that you drew back from him, when he withdrew his obedience to your father? Because it was me he married? Were you forced to choose between your father and your brother?

We were two old women in one small city, two old women, both lonely, both constantly circling all these years around a man you knew at the piano and I knew in bed -- forgive me, Nannerl, but that's how it was, there I did know him, and that too was part of him and not the least important part. Is that what you so resented in me? I never led him on with my sensuality, just remember that! A puritan soul he was not. Do you think a Puritan could have written those operas? Do you really think so? Perhaps it was also because we went ahead and did what you wanted to do but didn't dare to, because we fought for our love and prevailed, while you did what you were told. Oh, I know you could say I wasn't good enough, I didn't deserve being loved. Well, then, who is good enough to be loved? And anyways, who can say what love is, and what is only confusion and youth and infatuation?

I was not being untrue to Mozart when I married Nissen. Nor was I before when I lived with Nissen before we married. Was I supposed to forgo the pension? It was hard enough to make do with the money we had and without Nissen's watchfulness, it wouldn't have worked at all. No, I was not unfaithful to Mozart with Nissen. Quite the contrary. Even if I had wanted to, I couldn't have forgotten him for one minute of the day or night.

If we had gotten closer to one another, perhaps I could have explained all this to you. Just to you. But it is hard to formulate a clear thought when you are only allowed to think with your mouth shut. There are many things you have to be able to say aloud so you can think about them. That has only become clear to me because I can say it to you today, now that you have been lying in the cemetery at St. Peter's these last twelve years. You were sure you didn't want to be buried in the family vault. It wouldn't have bothered me at all to be with you in there.

Constanze stood up, quickly found what she was looking for in the drawer, and hobbled back to her chair. The pains in her leg had suddenly gotten worse.

Listen to this, Maria Anna: "Wolfgang was small, frail, pale in complexion, and completely lacking in all pretensions of face and form. Apart from his music he was and remained almost always a child; and this is a major trait on the dark side of his character; he would always have need of a father, a mother, or some other supervisor. He could not handle money and, against his father's will, he married a girl who was not fit for him; and thus the terrible domestic chaos at the time of his death and afterwards."

Do you remember that? You wrote that yourself. And now shall I tell you something, Maria Anna Freifrau von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg? I may not have been a proper girl for him and I may not have understood him, but there was a lot to him you didn't understand either. He was no child, and if I don't know anything else, I know he couldn't tolerate someone supervising him. Perhaps he never was a child at all. How on earth can you be a child in a traveling coach, in those salons, incessantly underway, always being gaped at, never properly at home? You tell me! You all would have been quite content to have him remain a child his whole life long. But he did not go along with that. And shall I tell you something else? The domestic chaos, that bothered him far less than pursed lips and disapproving looks, and he contributed his own share to the chaos too, it wasn't just my doing. He only cared for order in his music, and when that was written down and finished, then let the pages fly!

Ah, Nannerl. I will put flowers on your grave on the day of your death, and light a candle for you, if our dear, good Creator lets me live. It's only four more weeks till then.

## VIII.

*(Supper over, the two sisters pass the evening with a drink of punch and talking of former times. Mention of "Don Giovanni" brings Constanze to remember the English soprano of Italian descent, Nancy Storace, who was the first Susanna in "the Marriage of Figaro," and Mozart's fondness for her.)*

A dog barked, another joined in, windows were thrown open, a figure ran across the square, then heavy steps thudded on the paving stones.

Sophie leaned out the window, turned back disappointed. "Maybe it was a house-thief. Nothing more to see."

"It could have been a lover caught by the father."

"Or the husband."

"What you don't think about."

Sophie hummed Don Giovanni's serenade, "Deh, vieni al la finestra."

"Don Giovanni always seemed eerie to me," Constanze said.

"I certainly wouldn't have wanted to run into him," Sophie declared emphatically.

"Because you couldn't have trusted yourself with him?"

"Well, who could? Could you? I don't think Mozart ever believed someone could always be true. Take Zerlina and Susanna, to say nothing of Fiordiligi and Dorabella."

"But Konstanze and Elvira and Pamina, they were true."

"They were."

"And you?," Constanze leaned forward, "were you always faithful to Haibl 41/?"

Sophie pulled herself up to her full size, nostrils flaring. In her indignation, she looked comical and dignified at the same time. A long couple of minutes later, she exhaled noisily. "I wasn't so young any more, I mean, I wasn't young at all when I married him. . . .And down there in Diakavar, the temptation was not very great. If it had been. . .no, I think I would still have been faithful Yes, definitely. And you?"

"Me? Well, it certainly isn't so, what people say," Constanze said.

"What do they say? I haven't heard."

"Stupid gossip. It's nothing I want to talk about."

She had enjoyed it when a man followed her with his eyes, she knew she wasn't beautiful, she had never been beautiful, even when she was a young girl. "She is not ugly, but you wouldn't call her beautiful either. Her whole beauty lies in two sweet, dark eyes and a pretty figure." She would so like to have been beautiful, 0 yes, who wouldn't?

Each one's role in the family had already been settled in Mannheim. Josefa was the competent one who could cook, the one with common sense who kept the peace among them. Louise -- our Aloysia -- was the beauty, the gifted one with her marvellous voice, her silky hair, her pert little nose and her gracious way of moving. Sophie was the littlest, everybody's pet. And she -- she was just Constanze. With no particular looks, no personality, no special talent. Nothing special about her at all. Not like Nancy Storace 42, the blond from England, the first Susanna, lovely as an angel, and she sang like one too with her wonderfully dark mezzo, with that mysterious warmth in her voice, and Mozart came home later and later when he rehearsed "Figaro" with her, and Constanze had waited there with her swollen legs, her puffed-up belly, and when he finally came in the door, he had such a smile of satisfaction and she could not believe that it came only from the applause of the musicians who would clap after the rehearsal of an aria and call him Maestro, and he would laugh and kiss her on the nose and not take her seriously. She had been convinced at the time that Nancy Storace was his lover, a radiant mistress who sang his melodies as though she had made them up herself in that very instant, no, not made them up but rather found them somewhere deep inside her and simply had to bring them out for there was no room in her for so much beauty. Every woman, even one much more clever, prettier, more important than she, would pale in comparison to Nancy Storace. And despite all her jealousy, Constanze could never bring herself to think ill of Nancy. Later on Mozart would talk about going to England, about the commissions and operas and financial possibilities there, and all she heard was Nancy. That was serious, far more serious than the story with Josefa Duschek.

Time and again she had pestered Mozart: have you? or haven't you? As though the lady from England would be less of a threat if Constanze had known for sure. He had never let himself be coaxed or threatened into admitting anything, even though it had often been a relief to him when he had owned up to her what he had done in some corner with some passing flirt. But this was different, she had felt it, and yet had always tried to treat it as if it fell in the category of his chambermaids.

How dumb of her.

When he entered the scena and rondo he had composed for Nancy Storace's concert in his list of works, he added: "For Mademoiselle Storace and myself." How the piano wooed and caressed the singing voice, how the dialogue between the two helped them blend into one, each stood alone and yet was entwined around the other in a movement of exaltation that made each greater still.

To ask if Mozart had bedded this woman was not just superfluous, it was ridiculous, one was ashamed. Actually it would be even worse if they never did lie in each other's arms. Unrequited yearning never died. Lived on even when it had stopped hurting.

But how was she to know that then? She was so young, could not think properly at all. When she was pregnant, she would not let herself think, that way she blocked the fear that came with thinking, the fear of giving birth, the fear of dying. No sooner were you expecting than everyone started telling you about this one who died in birth and that one whose baby was a monster. And as if that wasn't enough, the heavy breasts, so hot and painful and large. Often she used to tell herself she should probably have nursed her children herself, there were women who did that and not just housemaids and farmers' wives. But Mozart would not hear of it.

No, with so much anxiety eating away inside of her, thinking had been impossible. Anyways, where was she supposed to learn how? No one expected her to think.

## IX.

*(It is after midnight now and Constanze has finally gone to bed. But sleep does not come. Thoughts of Mozart crowd in upon her. Rage consumes her as she relives the terrible time of his sudden death. The rage spent, she realizes that her ability to visualize the man Mozart who was once her husband is fast fading away.)*

Suddenly she felt she just had to see the portrait, the unfinished one that was lying in a box in the wardrobe. She climbed out of bed, the floor ice-cold under her bare feet.

The door to the wardrobe stuck as it always did in the fall. The dampness. Constanze pulled and tugged, pressing against the lock on the other door. When the door finally leaped open, Constanze almost fell over. She stood there some time catching her breath before she knelt down to take the box out of the wardrobe. Bending over did not work anymore, that way she would quickly lose her balance.

She opened the box and took out the picture. Now she had to get back on her feet. With her right hand she steadied herself on the centerpost of the wardrobe, the picture clamped under her left arm. After three tries, she succeeded in standing back up. She lit the light on her night table and laid the portrait before it. The flame flickered, light and shadow played across his blond hair and his high forehead, gleamed on the soft wood, until she fancied she could see Mozart's fingers dancing on the keys of the piano.

A shame that Lange never finished the picture. Or was it?

Why is it that Aloysia's husband should have understood Mozart better than the others? He had simply looked on, and yet you seemed to sense something of Mozart when you viewed the picture just because he hadn't finished it. She felt a strong desire to stroke his cheeks, his hair. When the Novellos had stood in reverence before the picture, they had felt his genius.

Mozart wrote her once that he spoke with her picture. ". . . I do so a good half hour before I go to sleep. . . and again when I wake up." But she could not speak to his, could only look at it, and the longer she looked, the greater the sadness she felt growing inside her. She so wanted to ask: who are you really? She would have gotten no answer, that much she knew at least. Perhaps he would have kissed her or said something funny. She had not seen his melancholy, even when he slept beside her every night. Had he hidden it from her? But not from Lange? Even when he had spoken of forebodings of death, she had not perceived his sadness. There was a time once when she had even thought, that's what he gets for eating that greasy chicken so late at night at the "Silberne Schlange."

Well, there was no taking it back. You couldn't take anything back, couldn't change anything, what was said was said. On the other hand, the memory was capable of giving new form to things remembered, the way a goldsmith carefully forms an ornament, and little by little bringing them to the point where they no longer hurt so much. Or you shut the door and turned the key twice in the lock. Didn't think about it anymore. And then the matter was buried out of sight, embalmed like the emperors in their vault because no air could come in.

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With a rush, it was there again. That consuming fury that enveloped her now as it had then and made her clench her fists and bite her pillow. On the edge of screaming she was just able to hold back, she did not want to see Sophie now, she had to fight it out with herself, no, with Mozart.

He had deserted her, had simply skulked away into death and left her alone and helpless with a bawling baby and a distraught seven-year-old. Had ducked out on her by dying, just as he had often evaded her with a joke or a kiss. Just lain there with his ashen, swollen face, unanswering, and let her scream, left her all alone with her desperation, with her fear, with the debts, with all the questions she confronted, with all the questions whoever the others were also faced, and every question fuelled her fury more. How could he do that to her, he who always said he loved her? He had it good, no one bothered him anymore. She hated her mother, Josefa, Schikaneder 46/, van Swieten, Albrechtsberger 47/, Puchberg, she hated Josef Deiner 48/, hated everyone who took her hand and shook it as though she belonged to them, the not-to-be - understood sentences mumbled about God's will and Providence, hated the canary that started to chirp, hated the whimpering children, hated everyone who was still alive and could come and go, hated her hands beating on the pillow, hated her trembling legs.

She wasn't sure she hadn't hit Carl when he began to cry. Her mother had taken him with her then, or was it someone else, what does it matter, no, her mother left with Wowi in her arms. And suddenly the apartment was empty, it throbbed with emptiness, and only Sophie came up to her with quiet steps, held her in her arms and cried with her, but Sophie knew nothing of the rage inside her, only sobbed silently and helped her to undress, took away the pillow still soaked with Mozart's sweat, Constanze fought her but Sophie took it and returned with a new one, freshly ironed and cool, and covered her up.

The rage had lain hidden all these years, now it shook her like a cramp, the more she tried to force herself to lie still, the harder her legs trembled and shook. She stuffed her hand in her mouth and bit down hard. And it didn't hurt.

Suddenly she saw herself as from afar, saw herself laying there, a haggard woman with white hair who was crying fifty-year-old tears, the unredeemed fury of fifty years burning her throat as though she had drunk acid.

Back then the rage had been followed for a long time by utter indifference, she let everything happen as it would, it did not matter to her, whatever was done -- or not done -- did not bother her at all, just so long as she did not have to make any decisions.

The living room at the apartment materialized before her like a stage, but in miniature, twice the size of a doll's house, but everything was there as it should be, the mirror in the golden frame, the chandelier, the two sofas, even the porcelain figures. She saw herself sitting in one of the chairs, saw Carl come in and embrace her and rub his head on her shoulder. She saw herself rising abruptly, saw Carl's head hit the side of the chair, saw him standing there bewildered and then starting to cry enormous tears that shined like glass.

It was only now that she could mourn with her son, for her son. Then, she had been thankful that van Swieten had taken the lad to Prague. She couldn't bear his touch, every touch was dreadful to her, she even hated the touch of Wowi.

You had it easy, dear husband, she said half aloud into the dark and then started at the sound of her own voice. She was not crazy. Old, yes, but not crazy.

She had prevailed in her life, she had paid the debts, all of them, even those of Puchberg. She had administered the estate, and she had seen to it that the biography Nissen had started was finished and printed. What more could be demanded of her?

To the world, Mozart had left his music, his operas, symphonies, concertos, his masses and chamber music, and the arias he had written for other women.

To her, he had left debts to pay and two infant children.

She stopped, startled.

She thought: Dear God, I am sinning! My Jesus, have mercy on me.

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They all pictured him their own way and they all wanted to hear which of the portraits best caught his likeness. After all these years, how should she know? Didn't the features of a person also change with death? And besides, pictures didn't move, they fixed a moment in time, but Mozart had never stood still, he was forever in motion. And was it really so important if his nose looked this way or that, if his eyebrows were more or less arched? But nobody was the least bit interested in that place under his chin that he so much liked to have scratched.

It was the fault of the pictures, she mused, that she could not see him anymore, which showed everything else very clearly but left his face a blank. His face had been talked to death, erased by empty words, nothing but words.

He did not need any of us, she murmured. He didn't need you, and he didn't need me. At least, not where it really counted. There he needed only his music. Even if he once had written her:

". . . you can't imagine how boring it has been without you the whole while!--I can't describe my feelings, there is a kind of emptiness--that hurts inside--a sort of yearning that won't be satisfied but doesn't go away--goes on growing day after day;--when I think how gay and carefree we were in Baden together--and what dreary, boring hours I spend here--even my work gives me no joy because, being used to setting it aside now and then and passing a word or two with you, even this pleasure is unfortunately not possible--if I go to the piano and sing something from the opera, then I have to stop right away--the emotion is too great--basta!--the minute my work here is done, I won't be here anymore."

When she received this letter, she should have gone right back to Vienna. Then it would have been. . .

Nothing would have been. His emptiness, his yearning, they were nothing she could have filled. Neither she, nor anyone else. No one. In the past year or so, she thought she had herself felt something of this emptiness. But perhaps this too was another, not the same.

## X.

*(Calm comes finally, and vagrant thoughts. And suddenly she awakes, not knowing when she fell asleep. A final insight: Mozart is no longer hers; now he is "theirs." And a new day begins.)*

Soon there would be no one left to carry on the Mozart name, this honor, this burden. The name would die out either with Wolfgang or with Carl.

He is immortal, one said. Word has it that Grillparzer intends to compose or maybe he already has composed an ode to celebrate the unveiling of the statue. But this statue was not one you could invite to a banquet.

The narrow little man who could jump over chairs and tables meowing like a tabby and turn somersaults, who liked to play the fool -- or the other one?, ran the thought through her mind to her surprise -- this man was going to stand dignified and motionless in the square. But it would not be the one who wrote "Figaro" and "Don Giovanni," it would be a statue and, as with every likeness, it would tell more about those who made it than about the one depicted. Wowi and Carl would come for the ceremony. Perhaps Wowi would conduct his father's Requiem again as he did after Nissen died. Everyone said then they had never heard a more beautiful, more touching mass for the dead.

Wowi had loved Nissen as a father. At least she had accomplished one thing as a mother: she had given him a father.

What a pity that he did not go to England despite the warm invitation of the Novellos. In England they would have welcomed a Mozart with open arms. Or is that what kept him from going? He would have been welcomed, but as his father's son. Perhaps it had been a mistake to make him into "Wolfgang Amadeus." He might have had it easier in life just being Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart.

Night thoughts. Vain, idle night thoughts. The dark can't last much longer before the dawn comes, she will fix a strong coffee, Mona must run out and get a fresh roll to go with it. No, not Mona, she left ages ago. Luise. Of course, Luise. Funny that the maid would have the same name as the sister she had seemed like a maid to.

Luise really must get busy and polish the silverware. Yesterday she had noticed that the forks and spoons were tarnished, unsightly, as though they weren't sterling at all. Soon as she got up she would tell her. Yes, she, Constanze von Nissen, the Widow Mozart, née Weber, was the possessor of six silver-plated spoons, six forks, and five sterling silver spoons and it would have been six if one hadn't been thrown out accidentally with the trash. Fifty years ago their whole table silver had wandered off to the pawnshop. To this day she would like to know who ended up with the pawnticket. Mozart didn't pay much attention to such things. Who would be wearing her good pearls when she was gone? Wowi can hardly give them to his Josephine, that would be sure to cause suspicion no matter how gullible or indifferent her husband was. And besides, hadn't this romance since become a thing of the past?

The sky was no longer black and yet still not light, the window was beginning to emerge against the darkness of the room. A dog barked, only once and that muffled. Soon the first servants would be underway. She shook her pillow, settled back down. Now she really could go to sleep, all of a sudden she was very tired. An hour or two, not more, otherwise Sophie would start with her questions. The outlines of the furniture loomed like silhouettes. Wowi and Carl

would probably sell most of it, the transportation to Vienna and especially to Mailand was too expensive. And the things here had no meaning for them anyways, only for her. She grew sad thinking that her things would end up in some flea-market somewhere, fingered by strangers for whom the scratch in the tabletop said nothing about the day when the knife slipped out of her hand as she was cutting a quill for Nissen, in whose eyes this scratch was merely a defect that reduced the value, for whom the round spot was just a spot and not a reminder of a happy evening.

Who was sleeping now in that bed where her children were born, where Mozart had died? When you have lived as long as she had, you left few persons behind, but correspondingly more things. When she moved to Copenhagen with Nissen, such thoughts had not come to mind.

Where actually did the mirror in the golden frame disappear to? She was sure she had taken it to Copenhagen.

What a turmoil in her head, things important and unimportant all jumbled together, just like before in the apartment in the Rauhensteingasse. She tried to recall the fugue that Mozart had composed for her. Fugues were the essence of order, a careful structure with no place for disorder. The fugue eluded her, not even the theme wanted to come, instead the duet of Pamina and Papageno drifted through her head. "Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann reichen an die Gottheit an." ("Man and wife and wife and man verge on being divine.")

She must have dropped off for she woke with a start, the room was filled with the clang of church bells, a cool, pale light came in. With wonder, she realized that she wasn't worn out after a night like that but was surprisingly alert, eager for the new day. The smell of coffee sneaked in from the kitchen. Constanze lifted her legs out of bed, rinsed out her mouth, combed her hair. An old woman cannot let herself go around with straggly hair, she is nothing to look at anyways, she always said. It wasn't vanity, it was consideration for others.

She went to the window, opened it. A solitary, washed-out ray of sun timorously fell on the square. Down there Mozart would stand, a handsome and commendable monument according to those who had seen the statue in Munich. Did it matter to him that he would stand with his back to her? He would probably just shrug his shoulders, that's not really me, and add perhaps that he was looking forward to the pigeons and the sparrows who sooner or later relieved every monument of its dignified pomposity. They are making you up, she said softly, re-inventing you. Now you are called the greatest son of your beloved hometown. You like that? They are turning you into just what they want you to be. I can't do that. But then, I can't even find you anymore.

She breathed in the morning air, felt it deep in her lungs, sharp and cool. It was good still to be alive. She was looking forward to walking across the square later, to seeing what the workers were doing, to bringing a piece of Wurst to the janitor's dog.

In the other room, Sophie gossiped with Luise.

Constanze began to laugh. Sophie flung the door open, stood there, worried and wondering. "What's the matter? Do you need something? Are you sick?"

"Something has just become clear to me," said Constanze, "I will never ever be able to picture again just how he used to scratch himself, because now I would have to think: that's the way a genius scratches himself. Do you understand?" Sophie shook her head.

Constanze put her arm around her. "It doesn't matter. Already there's a hint of snow in the air, just smell it."

And if it wasn't exactly like this, the fact is that in 1841 an old woman often looked out at the rain in the square which then still had the name Michaelisplatz and, later, was to become Mozartplatz.

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## XI.

A postscript to Renate Welsh's book:

The monument to Mozart was unveiled and dedicated in Salzburg on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1842.

The two sons, Carl and Wowi, were present for the occasion. Constanze was not. She had died six months before, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March.

With her died the last person who could claim a close personal relationship to Mozart as an individual and as a composer. All the others were gone: Gottfried van Swieten had died in 1803, Joseph Haydn in 1809, Emanuel Schikaneder in 1812, and Nancy Storace in 1817. They were all gone: Michael Puchberg in 1822, Antonio Salieri in 1825, Nannerl in 1829, and Aloysia in 1839. The sons lived on some years more, but Carl was only seven when his father died and he probably carried little memory of him, and Wowi never knew his father at all.

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Index to the introductory pages

- Blom, Erich, German biographer, 2  
 Braunbehrens, Volkmar, German music historian, 3
- Einstein, Alfred, Mozart musicologist, 2
- Haibel, Sophie Weber, 5  
 Hildesheimer, Wolfgang, German author, 2  
 Hutchings, Arthur, British musicologist, 2
- Landon, H.C. Robbins, American musicologist and biographer, 3
- Mahler, Alma, 2  
 Mölk, Albert von, Salzburg priest and intermediary in correspondence between  
 Nannerl and Friedrich Schlichtegroll, 3  
 Mozart, Leopold, 1  
 Mozart, Maria Anna (Nannerl), 3
- Niemetschek, Franz Xaver, early Mozart biography written with Constanze's help,  
 3
- Sand, George, 2  
 Schumann, Clara, 2  
 Schurig, Arthur, German biographer, 2, 3
- Welsh, Renate, 4

Index to the Footnotes contained in the excerpts

Here, freely translated and abbreviated, are the footnotes identified in the selected texts with their original numbers.

1. Sophie Haibl, née Weber, 1767(?)–1846. Constanze's younger sister, 6
2. Luise..., Constanze's maid, remembered in her will, 7
3. Carl Thomas Mozart, 1784–1858. The second son of Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart, 7
4. Johann Georg Leopold Mozart, 1719–1787. Mozart's father, 7
5. Raimund Leopold Mozart, June–August 1783. Wolfgang and Constanze's first child, 8
6. Johannes Thomas Mozart, October–November 1786. The third child, 8
7. Franz Xaver Wolfgang (Wowi) Mozart, 1791–1844. The last of Wolfgang and Constanze's six children. Later called "Wolfgang Amadeus", 10

8. Georg Nicolaus von Nissen, 1761-1826. Married Constanze in 1809. They moved to Copenhagen in 1810, then to Salzburg in 1820. With Constanze's help, began work on a biography of Mozart, 9
9. Aloysia (Louise) Lange, née Weber, 1761-1839. Constanze's older sister, Mozart's first love in the Weber family, 9
10. Archbishop Hieronymus Joseph Graf Colloredo, 1732-1812, whose service in Salzburg Mozart fled in 1781 by remaining in Vienna, 10
11. Johann von Thorwart, guardian to the Weber children in Vienna after the father had died, 10
25. Franz Georg Graf Wallsegg, 1763-1827. Commissioned the Requiem, intending to pass it off as his own, 10
27. Josefa Duschek, 1754-1834. Soprano, friend of the Mozart family, 11
28. Caterina Cavalieri, 1761-1801. Soprano, the first Konstanze in "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," the first Donna Elvira in the Viennese production of "Don Giovanni", 11
33. Franz Xaver Niemetschek, 1766-1849. Professor in Prague; took Wovi in after Mozart died; wrote a biography with assistance from Constanze, 12
34. Johann Heinrich Feuerstein. Helped bring Nissen's uncompleted biography of Mozart to a conclusion after Nissen died, 12
35. Johann Anton André, 1775-1842. Music publisher in Offenbach to whom Constanze sold most of the scores remaining after Mozart died, 12
36. Fridolin Weber, 1735-1779. Constanze's father, 12
41. Petrus Jacob Haibl, 1762-1826. Sophie's husband. (In a remarkable coincidence, both he and Nissen died on the same day in 1826), 15
42. Anna Selina (Nancy) Storace, 1766-1817. The first Susanna in "The Marriage of Figaro", 16
46. Emanuel (actually Johann Joseph) Schikaneder, 1751-1812. Theater director with and for whom Mozart wrote "Die Zauberflöte", 18
47. Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, 1736-1809. Composer and colleague of Mozart, 18
48. Josef Deiner, waiter at the "Silberne Schlange" inn in Vienna who used to serve Mozart, 18