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CRABTREE AND THE DEATH IN VIENNA
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Wherefrom comes my title and wherefore does it lead? Being myself of mystical tendency, I was struck by the fact that this is the thirty-sixth Crabtree Oration, in the year 1989. Thirty-six is four times nine and 1989 contains three nines — one plus eight being nine for those already losing my thread. Nine is three times three and it was this symbolism which turned my attention to 1791— again the nines reappear, seven plus one plus one being nine — but this time there are only two nines or *soixante-neuf* if one be inverted!

The cothurnal event of 1791 was the passing from this world in Vienna on 5 December of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. But was it a mere passing or was there some pushing, and what is the nature of the coition of Crabtree with Mozart? My discourse then, gentlemen, will be in the nature of an inquisition to which I will add corroborative detail, as needed, to provide verisimilitude to what I trust will not be a bald and uninteresting narrative. The seminal questions are to the cause of Mozart's death and the part of Crabtree in this exitial affair. In contemporary times much has been made of Salieri's involvement in Mozart's death, but, as I shall seek to disclose, the *prima facie* evidence together with a modicum of circumstantial evidence points more to Crabtree. It is indeed quite astounding that Shaffer overlooked Crabtree when researching and writing his thespian masterpiece: *Amadeus*.

Mozart was one of seven children born to Leopold and Maria Anna Mozart. Only Wolfgang Amadeus and a sister, Nannerl, survived. It has been said that Mozart himself was beset throughout his life with chronic illness and that his early and untimely death could have been predicted. On the other hand, close examination of Mozart's medical history suggests that for most of his short life, Mozart was afflicted with symptoms of a relatively mild and temporary nature, the most commonly occurring problem being fever and joint pains. Some observers have chosen to interpret this in terms of repeated attacks of rheumatic fever, but a more plausible explanation is, in my view, Reiter's syndrome, one of the diseases of Venus. In fact, sources are clear that until August or September 1791 Mozart was, as we in the medical profession would say, as well as could be expected. It was after all 18th century Europe.

Little doubt remains in the minds of many, and indeed in Mozart's own mind, that he was poisoned. Mozart himself is on record as saying, 'I know I must die. Someone has given me *aqua tofana* and has calculated the precise time of my death — for which they have ordered a Requiem, it is for myself I am writing this.' It is my thesis that Mozart expressed in this statement great insight into his own demise and I put it to you that contemporary research has taken too little account of the full meaning of his statement. *Aqua tofana*, or manna of Saint Nicholas di Bari, is, in fact, a concoction containing arsenic and is so called after a Latin woman who used it to destroy a lover. Why was Mozart so specific about the nature of the poison? Perhaps he knew more than was ever revealed — until now, that is!

Crabtree's interest in Mozart dates back to January 1791 when Crabtree met Haydn at a meeting of the Grand Lodge in London. Joseph Haydn was familiar with Mozart's affairs from a farewell party in Vienna given for Haydn and at which Mozart was present. Haydn left for London on 15 December 1790, the day after that party, and arrived here on 1st January 1791. As I said, the Grand Lodge was the venue for the meeting between Crabtree and Haydn. Haydn himself was a member of the Lodge Zur wahren Eintracht (True Concord) and Mozart, of great fame and standing in Austria but less well known in England, was a topic of conversation in and around the Grand Lodge meeting where Haydn and Crabtree met. Haydn's stories of the great Mozart and his music inspired in Crabtree a resolve to travel to Austria and meet for himself the great genius whose art was sweeping other parts of Europe into a musical revolution. Although fascination with Mozart was a major factor causing Crabtree's sojourn in Austria, other contributory factors must have been Crabtree's predilection for travel and for German literature so ably explored for us by Larrett, dos Santos, and Bromage. Moreover, Crabtree was probably also keen to be at the coronation of Emperor Leopold II in Prague though, as yet, no source has revealed whether Crabtree did, in fact, attend the coronation. We do know, of course, that Crabtree was in Europe in the latter part of 1791 and spent some time in France, particularly at Orléans.

It is worthy of note at this juncture that Crabtree travelled widely in Europe, not only in 1791 but also on several other occasions and he seems to have been afflicted with that most painful of conditions of the perineum associated with the prolonged sitting and the constant jolting of coach travel: haemorrhoids or piles. Crabtree

must have been cognisant of the dictum of John of Arderne (1370), 'the common people call them piles, the aristocracy haemorrhoids, the French call them figs — what does it matter what you call them so long as you can cure them'. Crabtree was painfully conscious that apart from postural factors, piles are exacerbated by straining at stool — a charming medical euphemism — and he was a student of purgation, observing in his poetic style:

If it looks like clover, the trouble is over
If it looks like a dahlia, it's surely a failure.

Of course, in 1791, modern *conservative* palliation in the form of Lord's procedure or the eight-finger stretch was not in widespread use.

However, I digress, albeit on a fundamental issue of Crabtree's being. Let us return to the higher planes of life in Austria: the year 1791. Crabtree, upon arriving in Austria, was not formally introduced to Mozart in court circles but doubtless saw him at the Lodge Zur Wohlätigkeit (Beneficence), where Mozart was a master mason, and Crabtree also heard some of his performances. For Crabtree it was love at first sight — though possibly not for the first time — when he met Constanze Mozart. German musicologists have described Constanze as a sex-kitten, a woman of extraordinary *décolleté* and a silly woman incapable of understanding Mozart himself. Let us reflect for a moment on her predicament.

Constanze had had six children under conditions of near poverty, for Mozart had never enjoyed much more reward for his music other than personal ecstasy and public acclaim: the ducats did not flow into the coffers, and when they did, he was an extravagant spender. Mozart was also often away from home performing, conducting, indulging himself or negotiating some new commission, and when he was at home he was taking pupils or composing. The taking of pupils also cast a shadow on his fidelity and is a further indication of why Constanze was disenchanted with her earlier romantic affliction to Wolfgang Amadeus. When Crabtree arrived in Vienna, Constanze was, then, for the reasons just cited *eine Strohwitwe* — a straw widow — and Crabtree seized this opportunity to form a liaison with Constanze to fulfil his desires for the woman upon whom he had rapidly come to dote. Mozart remained besotted with Constanze, as his letters show, but he appeared insensitive to the void developing between them, although we should note that Mozart himself was not faithful and there are several references to him having his pleasures elsewhere; recall also that he probably suffered from Reiter's syndrome.

Constanze reciprocated Crabtree's advances and went to Baden with him in July 1791. In Baden, Constanze and Crabtree consummated their new-found love. Constanze was a frequent visitor to Baden and, up until this time, her genuine reason had been to take the waters for her health.

It gave her respite from the toils at home with Mozart which, as I have already illustrated, were a considerable strain upon her. Mozart had, therefore, no reason to be suspicious and he wrote to her, often more than one letter a day, whilst she was there. Not long after the beginning of the affairs of the heart had reached their climax between Crabtree and Constanze, Crabtree discovered an awful consequence: the Gallic Disease had reared its ugly head. Constanze too was dismayed and ridden with shame and guilt for she knew that the source of Crabtree's affliction was probably Mozart and she the courier of the evil. From the later recollection of Constanze, we learn that when she told Crabtree of her guilt, he was enraged and, being preoccupied with his diseased pudenda, cited the immortal words of Lucretius from *De Rerum Natura*, 'One man's meat is another man's poison'. This was, naturally, metaphoric language, but it is worthy of speculation that this is the point in time where the seeds were sown for the plot that was to develop in the minds of Constanze and Crabtree to see Mozart out of this world and into the next.

It was most likely that Crabtree was instrumental in devising the means, since you will recall from that great Oration by Tay on Crabtree's knowledge of *materia medica*, that Crabtree was later to describe the unguent compound of mercury and suet which would become known as Crabtree's Butter or later Blue Butter. Crabtree knew, well before the formal description of the Butter, of the properties of mercury from Hunter's book on venereal diseases, and also from the poem of Hieronymus Fracastorius (1483-1553) *Syphilis Sive Morbus Gallicus*. Whereas Crabtree devised the means to poison Mozart by buttering his bread, Constanze saw an opportunity for pecuniary gain. The plot conceived by them was to deceive Mozart into writing a great work as part of a commission, the work then being sold off after his death. This was the beginning of the Requiem Commission. The plot established, Crabtree had to flee Baden because Mozart arrived to take Constanze back to Vienna.

Shortly after Mozart's return to Vienna, he was to complete arguably his best-loved operatic work, *Die Zauberflöte*. He was also preparing for the journey to Prague for the coronation of Leopold and it was at this time that he received the commission for the Requiem. Accounts vary on the form that the commission took. Niemetschek indicates that the initial contact requesting Mozart to write the Requiem was made in writing but Rochlitz speaks of the arrival in person of a stranger who delivered verbally to Mozart the commission for the Requiem, and this version was, of course, incorporated into the film *Amadeus*. Mozart is known to have started work on the Requiem almost immediately, but work on it was interrupted and fragmentary. Indeed, there continues considerable controversy on the order in which various parts were written and how it was completed. In this context, my researches on Crabtree have shed further light, and I shall return to the completion of the Requiem in due course. The greatest mystery lies, in fact, in the types of paper used for writing the Requiem.

Although the Requiem was begun in July or August 1791, Mozart had to go to Prague at the end of August for the coronation and it is, therefore, very unlikely that any further progress was made until after those festivities, which included a performance of *La Clemenza di Tito* and numerous chamber concerts. Constanze accompanied her husband to Prague but the whereabouts of Crabtree at this time I have been unable to discover, though he too could have been at the coronation.

Mozart and his retinue returned to Vienna in the middle of September 1791 and it is important to my thesis to note that throughout the period in Prague, Mozart remained in good health. Indeed, he was well upon his return to Vienna.

On September 30th 1791, the first performance of *Die Zauberflöte* took place in Vienna, with Mozart conducting. At this point the plot to murder Mozart assumed a new and awesome dimension, for the opera offended the Ancient and Venerable Order of Free Masons. So much was the offence caused that many members of the Lodge sought Mozart's death for the ultimate heresy: the revelation of the ritual. Not only does *The Magic Flute* reveal the ritual, in the eyes of many, it mocks it. Thus was the Craft set on a course for the extinction of Mozart because they believed he had betrayed Free Masonry. Crabtree, himself a Mason you will recall, was to play a part in the deliberations of *Zur gekrönten Hoffnung* (Crowned Hope), though the Lodge knew nothing at this time of his affair with Constanze, and he used this opportunity to elevate his stature in the Lodge. He already had a plan to do exactly what the Masons wished to achieve. Hence Crabtree became the instrument of the Craft in the execution of Mozart: traitor to the Craft. Why did *The Magic Flute* offend the Masons? The libretto contains the words:

Es siegte die Stärke, und krönet zum Lohn
Die Schönheit und Weisheit mit ewiger Kron.

Weisheit (Wisdom), Schönheit (Beauty) and Stärke (Strength) are words from the St. John Masonic ritual and they also form the central triangle of the thirty-third degree of the Scottish Ritual of the Masons. Not only the words but also the music contains Masonic reference. The slow semiquaver, minim, minim phrase repeated three times in the Overture represents the three triple knocks of the ritual, and the dotted form seems to refer directly to the ritual of the Great Orient in Paris, just on the point of having its light extinguished in Revolutionary France. The opera is principally in the key of E flat major - three flats - and it has three boys and three ladies as characters interjecting in the main plot. Tamino develops from a Profane to a Seeker and thence through the degrees to Master Mason. The play of darkness against light pervades the whole plot and Sarastro, the Worshipful Master in the Lodge, is accompanied by 18 priests who sing 'O Isis und Osiris', exactly eighteen bars long. It has been said that Tamino is Mozart himself trying to release Marie Antoinette (Pamina) from her Masonic captors.

I must also remind you at this point that apart from the general offence to the brothers, Mozart was accused by one brother Mason of adultery with his wife, Magdalena Hofdemel, and Hofdemel himself also had a motive, therefore, for entering the conspiracy to murder Mozart. Crabtree, in order to fulfil his own desires to be free with Constanze and to achieve the task he accepted from his brother Masons, had to arrange the opportunity to apply his Butter to Mozart's bread. Records, including Mozart's own letters at the time reveal that he, Mozart, had during the final few months of his life a manservant who brought in food while he was working on the Requiem; a servant was necessary for Constanze was away for some of the time in Baden again. The servant's name was Joseph and he was referred to familiarly by Mozart as 'Primus', a play on the name of the Emperor, Josephus Primus of Austria.

Since Mozart had never been formally introduced to Crabtree in the past, it was not difficult for Crabtree, with modest disguise, to infiltrate the Mozart household as the servant Joseph; and once there he set to work with the

Butter. In a letter to his wife dated 8 October 1791, Mozart wrote 'What do I smell? Why here is Joseph Primus with cutlets. Che gusto! Now I am eating your health.' What awful irony this was, for within weeks Mozart's own health was to become abruptly much worse. There was a significant and sudden worsening of Mozart's health after the Lodge meeting on 18th November where, in fact, Crabtree's Butter was potentiated in its effect by an additional dose. On 20th November 1791, we learn that Mozart took to his bed, where he was to remain until his death.

Mozart's final illness was characterised by two incontrovertible signs: generalised swelling of his body and a generalised exanthem. In addition, he suffered nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting, and was generally (hardly surprisingly) very weak: a condition described as partial paralysis. These are the symptoms and signs of heavy-metal poisoning, and although Mozart himself believed it was arsenic (*aqua tofana*), the mercury of Crabtree's Butter is entirely compatible with the data on Mozart's terminal illness.

Mozart was near to death on the evening of 4th December and Dr. Closset was sent for. The good doctor was in the theatre and, in the time-honoured fashion of the medical profession, remained there until the performance was ended before going to attend to Mozart. As it was, all that Closset could do was to apply comfort in the form of cold compresses until the early hours of 5th December 1791, when Mozart suffered a convulsion and died, the incomplete Requiem strewn all over his bed.

What happened after Mozart's death presents to any contemporary view a set of circumstances of a profoundly bizarre nature.

The distressed Constanze climbed into her husband's deathbed in an attempt to inseminate herself — with the cause of his mortal illness. Of course, she well knew the true cause: poisoning — and so her behaviour must be interpreted as a device to divert attention from her complicity in the murder or as a manifestation of complex and confusing emotions arising from guilt and some true grief. Constanze was taken, Nissen tells us, to Herr Bauernfeind (literally enemy of peasants) or Joseph von Bauernfeind, who was none other than Crabtree. Harte has accurately drawn our attention recently to Crabtree's penchant for pseudonyms and in the circumstances surrounding Mozart's death, they were important and handy devices. Dr. Closset consulted a senior physician at the hospital, Dr. Mathias von Sallaba, and declared the cause of Mozart's demise to be *hitziges Frieselfieber* or acute miliary fever — a vague and non-specific diagnosis. No death certificate was issued and no autopsy was held. Within little more than twenty-four hours after death the body was destroyed, for Mozart was thrown into a pauper's grave: a simple pit full of lime — a receptacle for numerous corpses. Nobody was present at the burial, which took place on 6th December. The funeral arrangements and burial were prepared by Baron von Swieten, a Mason who had known Mozart for many years and who had on occasion helped him. Von Swieten knew, of course, of the circumstances of Mozart's death and by this time it was also known in the Lodge that Constanze had been having an affair with Crabtree and was implicated in the murder. Von Swieten may well have disapproved of the murder plot but was bound by the discipline of the Masons. The funeral arrangements and their all-too-swift execution were, then, a means of sealing the secret of the conspiracy of Constanze, Crabtree and the Craft to cause Mozart's death. Notice again the *three* parties involved.

One unforeseen consequence remained, however: the Butter had done its work a little too swiftly. Mozart had died before completing the Requiem, and for Constanze to benefit from its sale, it had to be completed. Süssmayer, a long-standing associate of Mozart and one who had been close at hand during the writing of the Requiem, has come to be the person accredited with the completion of the Requiem, not the least reason being that his handwriting was very similar to Mozart's and Süssmayer actually forged Mozart's signature on part of the autograph score of the Requiem. However, close examination of records of Constanze's later description of events indicates that she actually gave the incomplete Requiem score to one Joseph Eybler, and contemporary musicologists are now inclined to believe that whilst Süssmayer may have played a part, Eybler was a principal contributor. Eybler (*eine Eibe* — a yew tree) was one of Crabtree's less subtle pseudonyms from this period. The fact that Crabtree, writing under the pseudonym Eybler, completed the Requiem is all the more plausible because it offers for the first time some explanation of the paper riddle. As I mentioned above, the Requiem is written on two quite different types of paper with different water markings, and yet what is known about the order in which various parts of the Requiem were completed does not fit with the type of paper on which these parts were written. Of course, Crabtree under the earlier guise of Joseph Primus, had access in Mozart's home to the paper supplies and could easily have kept some for his personal use, possibly with the intention of copying the Requiem after Mozart's death.

The completed Requiem was sold, together with other of Mozart's works, on 7th February 1792 to Mason Baron von Jacobi, Ambassador of the Prussian Court and who was acting for Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia.

Constanze received 800 ducats for the sale to the Prussian, and through Baron von Swieten Constanze also commissioned a performance of the Requiem in the Jahn Rooms on 2nd January 1793, the proceeds of which brought her another 300 ducats. Whilst Constanze was now a free woman and making substantial sums from the Requiem and other of Mozart's works, her affair with Joseph Crabtree was at an end. We cannot be too certain about the reasons for this, but Constanze's guilt may have so persecuted her mind that she could not continue to consort with Crabtree. Also, it was likely that the Lodge was concerned about the possible implication of the Craft and decreed that the couple should have no further liaison. Perhaps the major factor in Crabtree's departure from the scene was the growing suspicion amongst people at large that Mozart had indeed been murdered. Despite the attempts to conceal the truth, the very circumstances of the funeral, *die Grabfrage* (the burial question, as it has come to be known) drew attention, comment and gossip, gossip that was to last for centuries and was to point the accusatorial finger at numerous possible murderers including, as we all know, Salieri.

Attempts to conceal the truth were continued under the direction of the Free Masons. Many still say that Salieri murdered Mozart. I have no time to lay before you the evidence against this.

Gentlemen, Salieri did not murder Mozart, but we know who did!