HERMINE CLOETER, FEUILLETONS, AND VIENNA: A FLANEUSE AND URBAN CULTURAL ARCHAEOLOGIST WANDERING THROUGH OPAQUE SPACES, BRIDGING PAST AND PRESENT TO RECLAIM WHAT COULD BE LOST

by

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Chapter One

The Stones of Vienna:
Hermine Cloeter and the Spatial Practice of History

Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt. Ein Engel ist darauf dargestellt...Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten von uns erscheint, da sieht er eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablösig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradies her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß er Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist dieser Sturm.
~Walter Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte”~

Die Ruprechtskirche! In der Schule haben wir gelernt, daß sie die älteste Kirche von Wien ist, und haben das sehr ehrfürchtig angehört. Wer uns aber hat sie jemals aufgesucht, ihr die schuldige Respektvisite gemacht?...Vergessen und vernachlässigt steht sie da, nicht anders als eine alte Mühle im Ausgeding. Nun sieht sie verwundert und ängstlich zu, wie ein junges Jahrhundert im Begriff ist, neue Kulissen um sie herum aufzustellen. Schutt und Ziegel liegen vor dem sterbenden Haus zu ihrer Linken aufgetürmt.
~Hermine Cloeter, “Vom ältesten Wien”~

Like Benjamin’s angel, Hermine Cloeter spent a lifetime puzzling through the rubble and remains that surrounded her as she wandered through the streets of Vienna. Cloeter is best known, however, for conducting a forensic and cultural archaeological investigation of the stones that marked the burial remains of Vienna’s most famous composer. Within days after Mozart’s death, no one knew where he was buried, only that it was in a common grave in Vienna’s St. Marx cemetery. The exact location of Mozart’s remains would remain a mystery for almost two centuries, until Hermine Cloeter ventured to “unearth” the truth about one of Vienna’s most beloved musicians. Using her

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Kelli D. Barbour in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographic style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

HERMINE CLOETER, FEUILLETONS, AND VIENNA: A FLANEUSE AND URBAN CULTURAL ARCHAEOLOGIST WANDERING THROUGH OPAQUE SPACES, BRIDGING PAST AND PRESENT TO RECLAIM WHAT COULD BE LOST

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Despite the authority that time holds in the discipline of studying events of the past, not all historians or writers analyzing the past use time to study history—some use space, including writers who write about and interact with an urban topography. The space used by these writers is built space, as well as inhabited and practiced "lived" space. Whereas time provides a transparent overview of history, the urban spaces tend to be opaque. Clarifying history through urban space is additionally troublesome, because built space and its attached memories are visibly forgotten and ignored as time advances. Despite the difficulties of working with and understanding urban space, some intellectuals specifically choose space as a tool of discernment of history. For these individuals, understanding history becomes an investigation of sensing, feeling, and
divining human activity out of the mass of artifacts and used spaces. Hermine Cloeter is one such urban forensic historian.

Cloeter’s writings record and redeem a tangible history, one based on her physical movement through the city, experiencing and exploring built elements of the urban landscape. Recognizing that pieces of the city’s spatial history are being lost, flaneuse Hermine Cloeter writes and records experiences of Vienna’s past through her own explorations of space, preventing the essence and cultural richness of the city from being lost in the progression of time. To prove this hypothesis, I have broken down my argument into four chapters. In Chapter One, I use biographical and autobiographical sources to look at the development of Cloeter’s use of urban forensics: her approach to Viennese history and the city’s built environment. In Chapter Two, I tie Cloeter to the cultural figure of the flaneur by describing her methodology of reading the urban topography and by showing her own position as a flaneuse. In Chapter Three, I look at Cloeter’s essay “Durch die engste Gasse von Wien” to illustrate her methods of urban hermeneutics. Finally, in Chapter Four, I analyze Cloeter’s interaction with individual built and lived spaces and artifacts, showing that Cloeter reclaims Vienna’s history by merging the current topography with the cultural richness of Vienna’s past.
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