Chapter Four

Hybridity and Reclaiming What Could Be Lost: Hermine Cloeter’s Vision of Vienna


~Franz Hessel, “Versuch mit Wien”~

In dessem Sammelband werden ‘Bilder’ vorgelegt, die in ihrer Gestaltung den früheren Tagen angehören, aber doch wohl darüber hinaus dem Wesen nach auch heute noch Geltung haben.

~Hermine Cloeter, Wiener Gedenkblätter~

A s/he opens the morning edition of the Viennese Neue Freie Presse, the reader’s eyes are drawn to the bottom right of the page, where the daily feuilleton articles recount the happenings of the metropolis of Vienna. Possibly captivated by the title, the reader examines the two or three page articles about society, music, politics, art, literature, and the city, all allowing the readers to relive the city through the eyes of the author.

Hermine Cloeter is one such author. Through her feuilleton articles in the Viennese Neue Freie Presse, Cloeter portrays her city as a mixture of the past and present and uses music, people, and streets to bridge between the two time periods—Vienna’s present time and Vienna’s history. Cloeter’s articles are not simply reports of the happenings of her city, but rather a developed portrayal that connects the past to the present.

In Chapter Three, I analyzed Cloeter’s “Durch die engste Gasse von Wien” in the context of Cloeter’s interaction with the illegible nature of Vienna and her ability to redeem, at least temporarily, the historical memories of the urban landscape and make

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them accessible to the inhabitants of the Austrian capital. In this final chapter, I will analyze Cloeter’s interaction with individual built and lived spaces and artifacts, showing that, achieving the purpose of urban forensics/cultural archaeology, Cloeter reclaims Vienna’s living history by merging the cultural richness of Vienna’s past into the current topography of the city. I will show that the parts of Vienna, which Cloeter chooses to portray—music, people, and architecture—create, as spatial and material clues, traces of Vienna’s city culture, a hybrid perspective of Vienna that accurately and appropriately reintegrates the glory of Vienna’s history with the present Vienna. First, I will show this hybrid perspective by reviewing the multidimensionality of the urban landscape and the urban writer’s relationship to the multiple layers of the city. Second, I will analyze two of Cloeter’s articles (“Einer aus dem musikalischen Wien” and “Wiener Hausmusik”) for specific portrayals of the city in music, people, and houses. I will analyze how these three specific material and spatial parts of Viennese heritage act as bridges between the city’s past and the city itself. Finally, I will analyze how these three bridges—music, people, and houses—create a hybrid landscape in Cloeter’s representation of Vienna.

To understand Cloeter’s creation of a hybrid Viennese landscape, we must first examine the phenomenon of hybridity as it applies to the urban space. The hybrid space of a city is a place where seemingly unconnected parts of the city are brought together and juxtaposed. The hybrid nature of the urban landscape is the subject of Michel Foucault’s writings about “heterotopic spaces,” which he defines as “real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society” and which are embodied as “all the other real arrangements that can be found within society;... a sort of place that
lies outside all places.”¹⁰⁷ Heterotopic spaces are real spaces, but not in the traditional sense that they are labeled on a map or described in a traditional city lexicon. These spaces are outlined through the structure of a society of living people—the society makes the existence of heterotopic spaces possible through its values and behaviors. This real heterotopic space, though it is invisible, lies outside of the official functions of the city and can also be defined as “other.” The “other” space is a real part of the city, even though it is intangible. This "otherness" also allows space to take on multiple meanings—the official meaning and other meanings. These alternative meanings of space need not be related—many times they are antagonistic and subversive. A religious shrine, for example, can become a political icon or even a locale for drug deals. It is this other space where less defined, outlying components of society (places, for example) can be arranged or bridged together. Another inherent ability of this other space is the creation of a unique perspective on the city, in which “men find themselves in a sort of total breach of their traditional time.”¹⁰⁸ The heterotopic space, therefore, can cross spaces layered through time and meld different time periods together.

Because heterotopias are inherent to the urban landscape, the urban writer, especially the flaneur, is particularly adept at perceiving multivalent/revolutionary dimensions and practices. Sensing the multiplicious nature of a city and adding to it, the urban reader and writer makes those dimensions a part of that varied perspective. In his analysis of the relationship between urban literature and the multifaceted character of the metropolis, Karl Riha observes: “in diesen Städteschilderungen werden die ersten und

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 354.
entscheiden Dispositionen des Stoffes getroffen, wird ein Fundus an Beschreibungsmöglichkeiten gelegt." As the city writer encounters the urban environment, his/her descriptions of the city become a mix of the more familiar urban descriptors and of a pool of new possibilities of meaning. Urban writers are no longer bound to portray the city in a two-dimensional manner. With the new possibilities of extra perspectives, they could add multiple dimensions to the city matrix—the possibilities for description allow for a plethora of debates over what the city really is and how it is to be portrayed.

A writer of urban literature, therefore, has a distinct role in the portrayal of the city. As contemporary theorist Deborah Parsons explains, the urban writer "adds other maps to the city atlas; those of social interaction but also of myth, memory, fantasy, and desire." The urban writer, as seen by Parsons, serves as a diviner who perceives the existence of an extrasensory version of the city. This extrasensory version integrates the atlas of the physical reality of the city with "other" maps of cultural ideas, memory, and space. The urban writer is as much part of the extrasensory version as these cultural phenomena—it is the urban writer’s ability to reveal previously unseen connections between the physical city and the cultural city that allows the metropolis to come alive. The ability to sense these extra dimensions comes as the writer, as well as the reader, recognizes that "cities have aggregate and multiplicitious identities, made up of their many selves, and geographical, sociological, literary, and art historical analysis." Cities are

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110 Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*. 1.
111 Ibid. 1.
multipart—they are an aggregate of geography, society, literature, and art. Every city is multi-dimensional, going beyond the pavement, cement, and stones, to include the culture, location, art, and history. Cloeter’s writings not only grasp the opportunity to discuss these cultural philosophies, but also portray the multidimensional aspect of the urban landscape, an aspect which has the effect of adding an invisible, but very forceful level of urban experience in Vienna to the stone of Vienna.

Cloeter’s “Wiener Hausmusik” discusses the phenomenon of Viennese house music in the nineteenth century. She focuses on famous musicians and the groups in which they played and by which they were influenced. Cloeter recounts the changes in Viennese music, including the opening of the opera house, the influx of famous musicians, and most importantly, the trend toward families and friends playing music in each others’ homes. In this article, Cloeter emphasizes the importance of music in the depiction of the city. Music constitutes a social icon, a material remnant of Vienna’s past, which brought family members and friends together and influenced the permanent position of music within Vienna.

The music from a hundred years prior to Cloeter persists in the form of sheet music available to the modern musician of Cloeter’s time and as a symbol. In Vienna, a city renowned for this quality, music functions as a bridge infusing the present music circles with an aura of the musical past. In other words, music as a component of Viennese society functions as the bridge or connection between Vienna past and Vienna present. As to the importance of symbols of music in a city, Lewis Fried, a critic of urban literature, recounts that “city life is the state of affairs within the city (the kinds of
behavior, language, shared activities) as well as the urban form itself...the city and its region stand for how and what people choose for themselves." Cities reflect the attitudes of their inhabitants. City life is shaped by what members of the society choose to do with their time, the behaviors in which they choose to engage. Human life is reflected as city life and city life is reflected in viewing the metropolis.

Because the people of Vienna chose music as a symbol for their city, music can be considered a behavior of sorts. As a behavior, music constitutes a component of Viennese city life. Cloeter, then, uses this chosen component to connect musical behaviors from two different time periods, a technique which is best illustrated in "Wiener Hausmusik." In discussing the developments in music of past years through the many musicians and unique Viennese Hausmusik culture, Cloeter recalls: "in der Mitte des Wiener Bürgertums ist das Lied geboren worden, das Lied in seiner Kunstform, das Lied, wie es die Welt eroberte." Viennese society served as the birthplace of the art song, a genre which eventually won over the world, placing Vienna on the forefront of music and changing the way music was played. Cloeter continues that although Schubert began the Lieder genre, he could not have created the Lied "ohne den Hintergrund des Wiener Bürgertums." This acknowledgement emphasizes, that even though one or two musicians, such as Schubert, may have been responsible for the actual creation of the art song, they could not have done so without the Viennese music society. Not only is the music important to the city, but the city is important to the music.

114 Ibid.
Cloeter provides further evidence of the importance of music to Vienna, which music is then directly responsible for a multi-dimensional hybrid city. Delving further into the musical singularity surrounding the city, Cloeter describes Viennese Hausmusik as the bridge between current musical circles of friends and the beautiful, enchanting music of the past:

Wiener Hausmusik! Was für ein verführerischer Lockruf! Ihre Uebung im alten Geist und Sinn des Wortes dürfte überdies gar nie und auch heute nicht ganz außer Brauch gekommen sein bei uns, und auch in unseren Tagen mag es in Wien gar manche Familie geben, wo in alter Treue und Beharrlichkeit Musik im engsten Freundschaftskreis betreiben wird.\(^{115}\)

Viennese house music, as described here by Cloeter as a social practice, mixes the ghosts of the musical past into the closest of friendships. Important in this text is the fact that Cloeter focuses on the music of the past and its role in musical enjoyment by many family circles. Music, to many Viennese, is not just something to be heard in the concert house, it is something to be brought into the home. Music allows families to be bound together and infuses the present with the past. Contemporary society can enjoy and integrate the music of the past into its city life.

“Einer aus dem musikalischen Wien” centers on Vienna in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, focusing on one individual musician in Vienna, rather than music as a whole. Describing the memory of an opening night of the “Barbier vom Bagdad,” Cloeter introduces Meister Franz Häbock to her readers. Häbock was a passionate teacher of music, whom Cloeter describes as spending his life giving to others.

\(^{115}\) Ibid. 3.
His feelings concerning foreign art and his understanding of art were highly respected and sought. When Häbock died, a piece of Viennese history and music went with him. In this article, Cloeter emphasizes the importance of the human being within the portrait of the city. By doing so, she gives her readers a sense of the importance of this historical figure, whose essence now exists in his music and pictures.

As in the case of music, Cloeter again focuses on historical, but significant, figures in her feuilletons, as a bridge between Vienna's past and present cultures. Music is only one part of the city—the individual behind the music is another part. As to the importance of human beings in the city, Fried explains that urban writers focused on the fact that “the city can be recalled to its idea: human nature can be enlarged, a ‘true’ self can be rescued.”116 The city is a human idea and is built by human nature. By focusing on the human aspect in the image of the city, the urban writer not only broadens the capacity of human nature, but also rescues the true self, the human self in the city from disappearing into time and numerous crowds.

Cloeter emphasizes the importance of the human in the city in “Einer aus dem musikalischen Wien,” in which she talks about Franz Häbock’s influence on the city. His life provides an additional human dimension to the city—one of a diligent musician. Among his many musical accomplishments is the personal contribution he brought to Vienna, the loss of which Cloeter laments on behalf of the city as a whole:

Für uns aber, die wir ihm trauern und in Freundschaft ins Dunkel nachblicken, ist das Dasein ärmer und leerer geworden mit seinem Heimgang, und uns will bedürken, nicht nur für uns, sondern für Wien

The loss of Häbock has created a hole in Viennese culture—not only have his friends lost a true companion, but Vienna has lost his eternally youthful presence and influence. Häbock’s absence is not only saddening to the friends in his social circle, but also to the Vienna, because of the loss of his cultural and artistic influence, the loss of a needed dimensionality. By rescuing Häbock’s legacy from a past Vienna and presenting it to the Vienna of the 1920s, Cloeter provides a human link between the two time periods, creating an amalgamated Vienna. The Vienna of Cloeter’s text glories in its elders when they are gone and memorializes their undying contribution on the city itself.

Like music and people, architecture, in the form of streets and rooms, perpetuates Cloeter’s use of bridges to illustrate the past-present Vienna heterotopia. Through the societal importance placed on a street or building, the city becomes multi-dimensional. The design of a street is not the important part of the city, especially in Cloeter’s Vienna, but rather, the aura or significance that surrounds it and gives the street or building meaning. Michel de Certeau, realized the importance of this quality in his “Walking in the City,” emphasizing that “memories tie us to that place...but after all that’s what gives a neighborhood its character.’ There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can “invoke” or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in.”

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dimensional when memories surround the dwelling. Memories and ghosts infiltrate the building structure and allow city inhabitants to live there. It is only in the lived-in, ethereally physical parts of the city that people can presently live and they can do so because these places are silently filled with ghosts, memories, and wonders of the past.

Cloeter, in “Wiener Hausmusik” and “Einer aus dem musikalischen Wien,” recalls the significance derived from the city’s architecture. For example, in “Wiener Hausmusik,” Cloeter lauds the streets as being the basis of Viennese music: “Glückliche Stadt, Glückliche Zeit, wo in Straßenauflauf in der Musik in der Musikbegeisterung seine Ursache haben konnte!”\(^{119}\) Vienna is fortunate to have music born from the crowded streets of the city. What Cloeter effectively does is unquestionably connect the past Vienna, through its streets, to 1920s Vienna, by reminding her readers that Vienna’s timeless music (another bridge between past and present) developed not in a single person’s mind, but on the streets of Vienna that are still present today.

As a second example of the importance of Viennese architecture in the city, Cloeter states in “Einer aus dem musikalischen Wien” that Häbock’s studio was arranged such that those who wished, could sit in the waiting room and listen “wie er mit der Vorgängerin arbeitete.”\(^{120}\) Here again, Cloeter illustrates the way the city permits and stimulates the enjoyment of itself; this time, specifically, she refers to the enjoyment of the social interaction between the people of Vienna. As depicted through Cloeter’s texts, these still existent and busy streets and buildings were and are integral to Viennese culture—first as a birth place for music and second as a more modern route of

\(^{119}\) Cloeter, “Wiener Hausmusik;” 3.
\(^{120}\) Cloeter, “Einer aus dem musikalischen Wien;” 2.
transportation. This connection allows these pieces of metropolitan architecture to bridge between the two time periods and again creates a merged Vienna, made multivalent by architecture filled with meaning and people, rather than just tables and chairs.

The analysis of each of these urban elements—music, persons, and architecture—from Cloeter's feuilletons, results in an appropriate fusing of the past Vienna to that of Cloeter's time. Made multivalent by these aspects of the city which are not a part of the Vienna described through a blueprint, but rather part of the city's other space, Cloeter brings a sense of multidimensional oneness to her city of Vienna in that she portrays the culture of the past as being inseparably connected with the culture of the present. She presents the behaviors, people, and places of the past, the very origins of the city that have worked to create everything that Vienna is, to the present generation, making a solid bridge between the two. Vienna is not just formed out of its present society—the legacy of the past shapes the city as well. By combining parts of the city together, Cloeter shows that "the city is not simply its location, describable in quantifiable terms. Rather, its cultural as well as its physical legacies must be accounted for. The city not only preserves but also generates those intangible values giving it a context as well as a direction."  

Culture (intangible values) mix with time (direction) and account for the uniqueness of a city. As the metropolis endures through time, it continues to preserve old values and to create new ones. Likewise, Vienna goes forward directionally through time, but is defined by its material and spatial remnants—music, people, and buildings—from the past mixed with the Viennese culture of the present.

121 Fried, Makers of the city: 207.
A well-known analyst of Viennese feuilletons, David Spitzer, evaluated the Viennese feuilletons as memorializing the "Unsterblichkeiten des Tages." Cloeter's bridges of music, of people, and of architecture, which infuse Vienna's history into the modern Vienna, serve as an ever present reminder of Vienna's unique and multidimensional cultural heritage that has affected contemporary Viennese culture and continues to affect it. Vienna is, therefore, a hybrid of its past and present, as the past continues to infuse itself with the present culture. How fortunate is Vienna, in Cloeter's eyes, to be the birthplace and childhood environment of a unique metropolitan spirit that includes material and spatial reminders of a variety of fine arts, visual arts, human masterpieces, and architectural uniqueness that synergize with the modern Viennese landscape to create a better whole, a better Vienna.

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