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Living Matter: Materiality, Maker, and Ornament in the Middle Ages

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Abstract

*This essay examines issues relating to materials and materiality and their signification in medieval art. Art historians have long dealt with these concerns and their symbolic function by juxtaposing texts, primarily from the scriptures, with material objects, but here I consider the medieval understanding of primordial matter as defined by Plato's creation account in the Timaeus. The essay argues that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the term *silva* used in Calcidius's fourth-century Latin translation of the Timaeus led to a linking of primordial matter with woods, forests, and, by extension, foliate decoration and ideas of organic growth and change. By focusing on the artistic discourse regarding the representation of primary matter, the primordial material from which the world was generated, it shows how medieval artists engaged with the polysemy of philosophical terms relating to questions of genesis and creation, human as well as divine. The multiplicity of meanings of some of the signifying terms for primordial matter resulted in the construction of new visual depictions that ushered in novel approaches to the signification of materials in medieval art.*

Unless and until it actually exists in matter, form is little better than a vista of the mind, a mere speculation on a space that has been reduced to geometrical intelligibility.¹

Questions pertaining to materials and materiality have become key to the study of medieval art. With the understanding that interaction with the material object was achieved not only through the sense of sight but also through the other senses and by means of embodied relations between the viewer and the object, issues of materiality and tangibility of the medieval object have become crucial to the medieval art historian. Scholars have realized that the meaning of a medieval object was enhanced by the signification of the material from which the object was wrought and the way that materials were linked through complex networks of textual references, chiefly biblical.²

In recent years, the study of the various qualities of materials in medieval art has come to constitute a viable area of research. Sometimes known as the iconology of material,

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1. Henry Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 95.

2. Günther Bandmann, "Bemerkungen zu einer Ikonologie des Materials," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 2 (1969): 75–100; Wendy Stedman Sheard, "Verrocchio's Medici Tomb and the Language of Materials: With a Postscript on his Legacy in Venice," in *Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Italian Sculpture: Acts of Two Conferences Commemorating the Fifth Centenary of Verrocchio's Death*, ed. Steven Bule, Alan Phipps Darr, and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Florence: Le Lettere, 1992), 63–90; Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe* (Munich: Waxmann, 1994); Bruno Reudenbach, "'Gold ist Schlamm': Anmerkungen zur Materialbewertung im Mittelalter," in *Material in Kunst und Alltag*, ed. Monika Wagner and Dietmar Rübel (Berlin: Akademie, 2002), 1–12; Hans-Rudolf Meier, "Ton, Stein und Stuck: Materialaspekte in der Bilderfrage des Früh- und Hochmittelalters," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 30 (2003): 35–52; Herbert L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2004), 19–42; Friedrich Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word in the Middle Ages," in *Sensus Spiritualis: Studies in Medieval Significance and the Philology of Culture*, ed. Samuel P. Jaffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1–30; and Erik Thunø, "The Golden Altar of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan: Image and Materiality," in *Decorating the Lord's Table: On the Dynamics Between Image and Altar in the Middle Ages*, ed. Søren Kaspersen and Erik Thunø (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2006), 63–78. See, more generally, Brigitte Buettner, "From Bones to Stones: Reflections on Jeweled Reliquaries," in *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, ed. Bruno Reudenbach and Gia Toussaint (Berlin: Akademie, 2005), 43–59; Dietmar Rübel, Monika Wagner, and Vera Wolff, *Materialästhetik: Quellentexte zu Kunst, Design und Architektur* (Berlin: Reimer, 2005); Michael Cole, "The Cult of

it assumes that physical matter has a certain symbolic value, established by texts, that is on many levels independent from and unrelated to the object itself. This signification enhances our understanding of the material from which the object was made.³ Furthermore, the study of materials and their metaphoric significance has become a useful tool for interpreting how materials capture invisibility and all that cannot be expressed visually. Scholars have demonstrated that there was a fundamental “real absence” in medieval art because of the inability of artists to represent the unseen and the invisible: namely, God. Drawing on a wide range of visual and textual sources, Herbert L. Kessler has emphasized how images of the divine negated, “through their explicit materiality, any possibility that they would be taken as real presences.”⁴ What could not be represented in a tangible form had to be represented by a metaphoric aspect of the material.⁵ Moreover, in the past two decades scholars in the fields of sociology and anthropology have shown that the physical object is both a medium for visual representation and an active agent in a complex network of relations. Such studies have made the

Materials,” in *Revival and Invention: Sculpture Through its Material Histories*, ed. Sébastien Clerbois and Martina Droth (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), 1–15; Monika Wagner, Dietmar Rübél, and Sebastian Hackenschmidt, eds., *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials: Werkstoffe der modernen Kunst von Abfall bis Zinn* (Munich: Beck, 2010); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011); and Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–circa 1204* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012). I thank Cynthia Hahn for sharing her work before publication.

3. For a recent overview, see Bandmann, “Bemerkungen zu einer Ikonologie”; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 19–42; and Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*.

4. Herbert L. Kessler, “Real Absence: Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision,” in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 104–48, at 144.

5. The study of material is further emphasized through the interpretive trend of “invisibility,” especially in painting, as a representational tool that negates representation. Scholarship on this issue has ballooned in recent years. In addition to Kessler’s study (ibid.), see, for instance, Klaus Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien* (Munich: Fink, 2001); Gerhard Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel: Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance* (Munich: Fink, 2002); Nino Zchomelidse, “Das Bild im Busch: zu Theorie und Ikonographie der alttestamentlichen Gottesvision im Mittelalter,” in *Die Sichtbarkeit des Unsichtbaren: zur Korrelation von Text und Bild im Wirkungskreis der Bibel; Tübinger Symposium*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Nino Zchomelidse (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 165–89; and David Ganz and Thomas Lentens, eds., *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren: Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004).

object, especially its material essence, an active, almost living protagonist in many art historical narratives.⁶

In addition to its metaphoric value, material offers a tangible presence that engages the spectator with regard to its actual or imagined place of its origin. Thus, material always suggests a type of alterity triggered by its temporal and geographic disjunctions. Because material cannot be created ex nihilo but must always be made of other materials or brought from somewhere else, it was always designated as either “local” or from “other places.” These could be actual geographic locations or imaginary other places. In both cases they could be understood as elsewhere—a place incapable of being seen by the human eye. For this reason, the study of materials, particularly in their architectural context, traditionally has been relegated to the field of *spolia* studies, where the reuse of specific, geographically dislocated materials is understood to indicate political or religious ideology.⁷

6. I am referring to what could be defined as a notion of “presentism” that has recently been seen as part of an ontological status of crafted “things” or objects for the sake of their being. See Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); “Things,” ed. Bill Brown, special issue, *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001); Lorraine Daston, ed., *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004); Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Hans Belting, “Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology,” *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (2005): 302–19; Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–38; and Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2010).

7. Charlemagne’s translating marble reliefs and columns from Ravenna to Aachen is one example. See Beat Brenk, “Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics Versus Ideology,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 103–9; Dale Kinney, “Rape or Restitution of the Past? Interpreting ‘Spolia,’” in *The Art of Interpreting*, ed. Susan C. Scott (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 52–67; Philippe Buc, “Conversion of Objects: Suger of Saint-Denis and Meinwerk of Paderborn,” *Viator* 28 (1997): 99–143; Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998); Anthony Cutler, “Reuse or Use? Theoretical and Practical Attitudes Toward Objects in the Early Middle Ages,” in *Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell’Alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo 46 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 1999), 2:1055–79; Rebecca Müller, *Sic hostes Ianua frangit: Spolien und Trophäen im mittelalterlichen Genua* (Weimar: VDG, 2002); Finbarr Barry Flood, “Image Against Nature: Spolia as Apotropaia in Byzantium and the dar al-Islam,” *Medieval History Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 143–66; and Dale Kinney, “The Concept of ‘Spolia,’” in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 233–52.

We would like to think that material signification existed throughout the Middle Ages and was applied to all types of material, and that the selection of materials would be essential for the transmission of the significance that foregrounds the object. For example, Bruno Reudenbach uses the scriptural reference to bronze in the building of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6–7) and especially the description of the making of the Brazen Sea, a large basin made of bronze, to interpret the early twelfth-century bronze baptismal font made by Renier of Huy for the church of Saint-Barthélemy in Liège (Fig. 1).⁸ Reudenbach refers to the following verses (1 Kings 7:23–25):

He made also a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round all about; the height of it was five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits compassed it round about. And a graven work under the brim of it compassed it, for ten cubits going about the sea: there were two rows cast of chamfered sculptures. And it stood upon twelve oxen, of which three looked towards the north, and three towards the west, and three towards the south, and three towards the east, and the sea was above upon them, and their hinder parts were all hid within.⁹

The twelve oxen are reproduced in the Liège font and constitute an iconographic analogue to the brazen Sea of Solomon. The other similarity between Solomon's Sea and the font is the simple fact that both are made of bronze. The shared material relations between the font and the Sea arose from the shared iconographic motif that enhanced the meaning of the material from which the font was constructed. Together, the material significance and the iconographic similarity informed Reudenbach not only of the value of the font itself but also of its constructive function as an object within the sacred geography of the developing city of Liège. The baptismal font drew parallels between, and thereby linked, the church of Saint-Barthélemy and Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

The relevance of the material signification of the object is clear, and meaning is rendered as much through material signification as through iconography. Looking at a bronze object from the second half of the eleventh century raises complex questions about the importance of the material in the formation of the object. The bronze reliquary shrine now in



Figure 1. Baptismal font, attributed to Renier of Huy, bronze, ca. 1125, Liège, Saint-Barthélemy (formerly in Liège, Notre-Dame-aux-Fonts) (photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg is intriguing in spite of its seeming simplicity as an object (Fig. 2). Three towers, each of which is pierced by a hole for a ring used to suspend the shrine during processions, give the casket-shaped object a pronounced verticality (the four kneeling figures on whose backs the shrine rests are probably later additions). The base of the box, now a void, was once formed of a wooden plank on which the relics of a saint rested. Although the reliquary's open rinceau-work structure offered the prospect of viewing the relics, these likely would have been kept in a smaller container or a cloth bag inside the reliquary. Thus, the relics themselves would have been invisible. As a vessel for the relics, the reliquary afforded only limited visual access to the sacred objects, creating a sensory experience of glimpsing.¹⁰

See also the essays recently collected in Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, eds., *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

8. Bruno Reudenbach, *Das Taufbecken des Reiner von Huy in Lüttich* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1984), 18.

9. Quotations throughout are taken from the Douay-Rheims translation.

10. See the recent catalogue entry on this reliquary with bibliography: Ursula Mende, "Reliquienschrein," in *Canossa 1077: Erschütterung der Welt; Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur am Anfang der Romanik*, ed. Christoph Stiegemann and Matthias Wemhoff (Munich: Hirmer, 2006), 2:443–44. The reliquary casket shares close stylistic ties and a similar mode of fabrication with some of the bronze panels decorating the doors at San Zeno in Verona. See Otto von Falke, "Romanisches Bronzegerät aus Verona," *Pantheon* 9 (1932): 165–67. See also my dissertation, where I discuss the prox-



Figure 2. Reliquary, bronze, height 22.9 cm, width 29.6 cm, depth 15 cm, second half of eleventh century, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg (photo: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

Apart from its four kneeling figures and three towers, the webbed interstices of the Hamburg reliquary are articulated by a rinceau pattern, an arboreal scroll that winds and unwinds. Objects with comparable decorative foliage, such as a

imity of these panels with other works produced under Hezilo of Hildesheim and date them to the second half of the eleventh century: Ittai Weinryb, "Under Western Eyes: Bronze and Sculpture at San Zeno in Verona" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2010).

bronze censer now in the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Berlin (Fig. 3), follow a similar pattern of ornamentation.¹¹ Like the censer, the reliquary was probably made in the prolific Hildesheim workshop that flourished, along with the abbey of St. Michael that housed it, in the eleventh century.¹² Sty-

11. Falke, "Romanisches Bronzegerät aus Verona."

12. See Peter Bloch, "Der siebenarmige Leuchter in Klosterneuburg," *Jahrbuch des Stiftes Klosterneuburg*, n.s., 2 (1962): 163–73;



Figure 3. Censer, bronze, height 15.1 cm, maximum width 8.1 cm, diameter of base 8.1 cm, eleventh century, Kunstgewerbe Museum, Berlin, inv. no. 1881.167 (photo: bpk, Kunstgewerbe Museen/Saturia Linke/Art Resource, NY). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

listic proximity to the candelabrum and other objects manufactured in the time of Hezilo of Hildesheim (bishop 1054–79) help date the reliquary and censer to the 1070s.¹³

and Ursula Mende, “Romanische Bronzen: Hildesheim und sein Umkreis,” in *Abglanz des Himmels: Romanik in Hildesheim; Katalog zur Ausstellung des Dom-Museums Hildesheim*, ed. Michael Brandt (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2001), 199–228.

13. On Hezilo, see Konrad Algermissen, “Der Hildesheimer Hezilo-Dom und seine Kunstschätze,” *Unsere Diözese in Vergangenheit*

Hildesheim, located in a remote area of Lower Saxony, benefited from being near the rich copper mines of the Harz region, which supplied the town’s casters with ample raw ma-

und Gegenwart: Zeitschrift des Vereins für Heimatkunde in Bistum Hildesheim 32 (1963): 72–89; and Bruno W. Häuptli, “Hezilo (Hizzil Hildensemensis), Bischof von Hildesheim,” in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz (Nordhausen: Bautz, 2006), 26:712–18. For the candelabrum in Hildesheim made under the patronage of Hezilo, see note 19 below.

terial for the large-scale production of works in bronze and other copper alloys.¹⁴

In what follows I focus on a discrete historic period, the late eleventh and early twelfth century, that witnessed an intensification within northern European monastic communities of the discourse of tangible objects, artisanal knowledge, and intellectual engagement with the conceptualization of the material world. In considering the shared habitus of knowledge in the monasteries, one striking piece of textual evidence comes to the fore. It dates to just before the period under discussion and reinforces a close connection between material objects and ideas.¹⁵ At the beginning of the eleventh century Gerbert of Aurillac, the archbishop of Reims, who would soon become Pope Sylvester II (r. 999–1003), wrote a letter to Hervé, bishop of Beauvais, with a request: “Therefore receive this man learned in the liberal disciplines, and accurately instructed in the art of artisans, whom many persons

14. Hans Drescher, “Bronzegrabplatten aus dem Hildesheimer Dom,” in *Kirchenkunst des Mittelalters: Erhalten und Erforschen; Katalog zur Ausstellung des Diözesan-Museums Hildesheim, Hildesheim, 1989*, ed. Michael Brandt (Hildesheim: Bernward, 1989), 205–38; Hermann Born, “Zur technologischen Erforschung von mittelalterlichen Bronze- und Messinggüssen,” in Brandt, *Kirchenkunst des Mittelalters*, 191–204; and Michael Brandt and Arne Eggebrecht, eds., *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen: Katalog der Ausstellung, Hildesheim 1993*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim: Bernward; Mainz: von Zabern, 1993). The availability of minerals in the vicinity of Hildesheim is one of the reasons for the development of the vibrant bronze industry in the monastery. See Christiane Segers-Glocke and Harald Withhöft, eds., *Aspects of Mining and Smelting in the Upper Harz Mountains (up to the 13th/14th Century) in the Early Times of a Developing European Culture and Economy* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 2000); and Lothar Klappauf et al., “Das Montanwesen am Rammelsberg und im Westharz: historische und archäologische Quellen zum 12. und 13. Jahrhundert,” in *Bild und Bestie: Hildesheimer Bronzen der Stauferzeit*, ed. Michael Brandt (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2008), 65–76. A testimony to the abundance of copper found in the Harz region can also be found in the writings of Albert the Great. See Dorothy Wyckoff, “Albertus Magnus on Ore Deposits,” *Isis* 49, no. 2 (1958): 109–22.

15. I am referring here to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus as he developed it in the afterword for his French translation of Erwin Panofsky’s *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*. See Erwin Panofsky, *Architecture gothique et pensée scolastique: précède de l’Abbé Suger de Saint-Denis*, trans. Pierre Bourdieu (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967). See also Pierre Bourdieu, “The Genesis of the Concepts of ‘Habitus’ and ‘Field,’” *Sociocriticism* 2 (1985): 11–24; and idem, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52–79. See also the useful discussion by Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 94–113, 221–42.

sought after with much money but whom we retained.”¹⁶ Gerbert beseeched Hervé to place under his auspices an artisan (*opificum*; nominative *opifex*), referred to only as “D.” Gerbert described “D” as an artisan or, more specifically, a maker of “things.” Making “things” in the context of the medieval church related chiefly to creating liturgical objects, which meant mastering techniques related to silver- and goldsmithing, enameling, and small-scale casting. What is most interesting about the letter is that it says “D” was educated in the liberal arts. In stressing that “D” had received such an education, Gerbert deliberately presented him as what we might call an artist-intellectual. As an artist and a student of the liberal arts, “D” was familiar with the techniques used to fabricate an object such as the Hamburg reliquary. He also comprehended the material signification behind the reliquary, signification that remains—for the moment—unclear.

The Hamburg reliquary was produced within a monastic community, and a focus on artistic production within such communities—which are notable for their consistent, uniform habitus of intellectual and artistic production—makes the place of material signification within the works of art they created and used become clearer.¹⁷ The reliquary serves as a case study for understanding the interaction between artistic production and intellectual exchange as it evolved around the notion of material signification in the course of the eleventh century. Uncovering the reliquary’s material signification illuminates attitudes toward the concepts of creation and artistic creativity in northern European monastic culture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

One arresting element of the Hamburg reliquary is that its shell is almost entirely composed of arboreal ornament (Fig. 2). Because this is its most conspicuous characteristic, it is through the realm of ornament that I will explore the importance of material—and of materiality—in medieval monastic culture. If material signification was indeed a key concern in medieval art, then in the case of the Hamburg

16. “Suscipite ergo illum in disciplinis liberalibus eruditum, in opificum magisterio edoctum, a multis multa mercede expetitum, sed a nobis obtentum.” *The Letters of Gerbert, with his Papal Privileges as Sylvester II*, trans. Harriet Pratt Lattin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 264–65.

17. On monasteries as unique settings for artistic production, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). See also idem, “The Hand of God and the Hand of the Scribe: Craft and Collaboration at Arnstein,” in *Colloquium on the History of Medieval Libraries*, ed. Andrea Rapp and Michael Embach (Frankfurt: Klostermann, forthcoming). I thank Jeffrey Hamburger for sharing with me his forthcoming work.

reliquary it is through the object's ornament that its place can be determined. I argue that the specific type of ornamentation together with the material qualities from which it is made permit an understanding of the force of medieval materiality.¹⁸

Dense arboreal foliage like that on the Hamburg reliquary is also found in contemporary manuscripts. The frontispiece to the Gospel of John in the so-called Hezilo Evangeliary, made in Hildesheim no later than the first third of the eleventh century, presents a thick vegetal scroll as the decorative background of the page (Fig. 4). The framed background of the word *IN*, which forms part of the phrase "In principio" (In the beginning), is covered with dense vegetal ornamentation that shows a marked formal affinity with the reliquary's perforated bronze panels.¹⁹

18. Traditionally, and especially from the twelfth century on, vine scrolls and other types of arboreal ornament were interpreted as symbolizing revival, renewal, and generation. Medieval works of art such as the apse of the upper church of San Clemente in Rome and the Gloucester candlestick, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as the contemporary iconographic motif of the Tree of Life, were all interpreted as expressing meaning through the vine scroll motif. Because they were made or developed in the first half of the twelfth century, they were all interpreted in the context of Church reform. The current study deals with earlier objects and focuses on reception of philosophical ideas rather than Church politics; it does not aim to negate or reinterpret the objects and motifs developed in a later period. It is hoped that this study enhances our understanding of the deep symbolism present in ornament. See Ernst Kitzinger, "The Gregorian Reform and the Visual Arts: A Problem of Method," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (1972): 87–102; Alan Borg, "The Gloucester Candlestick," *Medieval Art and Architecture at Gloucester and Tewkesbury*, Conference Transactions 7 (London: British Archaeological Association, 1985), 84–92; Hélène Toubert, *Un art dirigé: Réforme grégorienne et iconographie* (Paris: Cerf, 1990); William Tronzo, "On the Role of Antiquity in Medieval Art," in *Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1999), 2:1085–1111; and Stefano Riccioni, *Il mosaico absidale di S. Clemente a Roma: exemplum della chiesa riformata* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2006).

19. Ulrich Kuder dates the manuscript to the second half of the eleventh century. See Ulrich Kuder, in Brandt and Eggebrecht, *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen*, 2:512–14, cat. no. VII-34; for an overview of the debate regarding the dating of this manuscript, see Ulrich Knapp, *Buch und Bild im Mittelalter* (Hildesheim: Dom-Museum and Gerstenberg, 1999), 60–66. A paper on Hezilo from 1984 attributes MS DS 34 to Bernward; see Gerd Bauer, "'Neue' Bernward-Handschriften," in *Bernwardinische Kunst: Bericht über ein wissenschaftliches Symposium in Hildesheim vom 10.10. bis 13.10.1984*, ed. Martin Gosebruch and Frank Neidhart Steigerwald (Göttingen: Goltze, 1988), 211–36. Both Hezilo and Bernward represent the same intellectual milieu, so such concerns about attribution matter less for the argument this essay is making. See also Fidel Rädle, "Calcidius und Paulus begründen ein Vermächtnis: zu Bernwards Dotationsurkunde

An interest in ornamented arboreal backgrounds is attested in earlier decorated frontispieces of the Ottonian period as well. Another opening page, this time associated with book production in Cologne,²⁰ presents a parallel mode of ornamentation (Fig. 5). In this frontispiece from a late tenth-century Gospel of John, the letters *IN* are foregrounded against a dense vegetal motif that prevents the reader from accessing the rinceau scroll and its background.²¹ The symbols of the four evangelists in the folio's borders and the Agnus Dei in the center are the only figural representations on the page, which otherwise remains entirely engulfed by arboreal ornament. A similar type of ornamentation can be found in a closely related frontispiece, dated to the second half of the eleventh century, from the Abdinghof abbey in Paderborn (Fig. 6).²² In contrast to the symbols of the evangelists in the preceding example, four unidentified busts surround a central Christ who is seated and holding a scroll with the inscription "Ego sum lux mundi" (I am the light of the world), from John 8:12. In the Paderborn manuscript, the dense arboreal scroll again covers the background of the entire page.

Medieval tradition asserted that Christ and St. John should both be envisioned as creators; the concept of *ex nihilo* creation

für St. Michael in Hildesheim," in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Medieval Latin Studies, Cambridge, September 9–12, 1998*, ed. Michael W. Herren, C. J. McDonough, and Ross G. Arthur (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 2:328–49. On Hezilo, see Häuptli, "Hezilo (Hizzil Hildensemensis)," 712–18; and Algermissen, "Der Hildesheimer Hezilo-Dom und seine Kunstschatze." The candelabrum in Hildesheim Cathedral that bears ornamental patterns similar to those in MS DS 34 is another work made under the patronage of Hezilo: see Willmuth Arenhövel, *Der Hezilo-Radleuchter im Dom zu Hildesheim: Beiträge zur Hildesheimer Kunst des 11. Jahrhunderts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ornamentik* (Berlin: Mann, 1975).

20. On manuscript illumination in Cologne in this period, see Peter Bloch and Hermann Schnitzler, *Die ottonische Kölner Malerschule* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1967), 2:38–40; Anton von Euw, ed., *Vor dem Jahr 1000: abendländische Buchkunst zur Zeit der Kaiserin Theophanu* (Cologne: Das Museum, 1991), 16; and Rainer Kahnsitz, "Ein Bildnis der Theophanu? zur Tradition der Münz- und Medaillon-Bildnisse in der karolingischen und ottonischen Buchmalerei," in *Kaiserin Theophanu: Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends*, ed. Anton von Euw and Peter Schreiner (Cologne: Das Museum, 1991), 2:101–34.

21. Bianca Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2003), 160–200.

22. Bloch and Schnitzler, *Die ottonische Kölner Malerschule*, 1:110–13; Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things*, 190; and Andrea Worm, "Das illuminierte Wort: Bildprogramme und Erzählstrukturen historisierter Initialen zur Genesis," in *Mittelalterliche Weltdeutung in Text und Bild*, ed. Susanne Ehrlich and Julia Ricker (Weimar: VDG, 2008), 99–132.



Figure 4. *Hezilo Evangelary, Hildesheim Cathedral, MS DS 34, fol. 164r, frontispiece to Gospel of John, early eleventh century* (photo: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY).



Figure 5. *Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Latin 98, fol. 154r, frontispiece to Gospel of John, late tenth century* (photo: reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

is fundamental to both Genesis and the Gospel of John, as is the act of separating light from darkness. As Jeffrey Hamburger has demonstrated, through a process of copying and repetition Christians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries transformed St. John into a deified evangelist: a creator whose book doubled for Genesis.²³ There may have been an intentional ambiguity between the two texts. Examples of the conflation of narratives in the books of John and Genesis are also found in works contemporary with the *Hezilo Evangelii*. In the dedication scene in the frontispiece of the *Bernward Bible* (early eleventh century), the background is dominated by a large golden cross with a “foliated aura”²⁴ around its center (Fig. 7). Here, too, abstract vegetal ornamentation decorates the background, and an arch at the top frames the scene. The man and woman under the cross are

23. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 21–42.

24. Henry Mayr-Harting, *Ottoman Book Illumination: An Historical Study* (London: Harvey Miller, 1991), 2:184.



Figure 6. *Gospels, from Paderborn, St. Peter and St. Paul Abdinghof Abbey, Berlin, Staatliche Museen Kupferstichkabinett, MS 78 A 3, fol. 207r, frontispiece to Gospel of John, second half of eleventh century* (photo: bpk, Berlin/Staatliche Museen/Volker-H. Schneider/Art Resource, NY). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

analogous to John and Mary under the cross at the Crucifixion. The nimbed male figure—variously identified as John or Bernward—is here holding a codex open to the first verse of the book of Genesis: “In principio creav(it) D(eu)s celu(m),” thus conflating the Genesis narrative with that in the book of John (“In principio erat verbum”). He offers the open book to the personification of the Church.²⁵ As parallel stories of Creation, the two books—that of Genesis and that of John—reiterated their commonality through their frontis-

25. In the *Bernward Bible* frontispiece, the resemblance of the depiction to a presentation scene has made some scholars see the person holding the open book not as John but as another donor, perhaps Bernward, or as a scribe. See Carola Jäggi, “Stifter, Schreiber oder Heiliger? Überlegungen zum Dedikationsbild der *Bernward-Bible*,” in *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn: Stifter und Auftraggeber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, ed. Hans-Rudolf Meier, Carola Jäggi, and Philippe Büttner (Berlin: Reimer, 1995), 65–75. For a discussion of the entire manuscript, see Knapp, *Buch und Bild im Mittelalter*, 32–37.



Figure 7. *Bernward Bible*, Hildesheim, Cathedral, MS DS 61, fol. 1r, nimbed male figure (St. John or Bernward) presenting a book to the personification of the Church (sometimes interpreted as the Virgin), early eleventh century (photo: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/Dom-Museum Hildesheim/Art Resource, NY). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

pieces, which are visually alike both in the rendering of the *In principio* initials and in the thick leaves that ornament the background.²⁶

26. On medieval and Christian concepts of Creation, see Johannes Zahlten, *Creatio Mundi: Darstellungen der sechs Schöpfungstage und naturwissenschaftliches Weltbild im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979); Dorothy F. Glass, "In principio: The Creation in the Middle Ages," in *Approaches to Nature in the Middle Ages: Papers of the Tenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lawrence D. Roberts (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 67–104; Johannes Zahlten, "Die Erschaffung von Raum und Zeit in Darstellungen zum Schöpfungsbericht von Genesis 1," in *Raum und Raumvorstellungen im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 615–27; Conrad Rudolph, "In the Beginning: Theories and Images of Creation in Northern Europe in the Twelfth Century," *Art History* 22 (1999): 3–55; Maaïke van der Lugt, *Le ver, le démon et la vierge: les théories médiévales de la génération extraordinaire; une étude sur les rapports entre théologie, philosophie naturelle*

Pioneering studies by Jean-Claude Bonne have dealt at length with the materiality and the place of ornament in medieval art. Bonne divides earlier scholarship on ornament into two categories. The first assessed it philologically, and proponents of this method held that if a certain vegetal or nonvegetal ornament adorned a medieval image the decoration must have a specific exegetical significance. The second approach, favored by Bonne, considered ornament a mechanism, a means of establishing relations among different parts of an object. Bonne shows how ornament guided the viewer's encounter with a medieval object. According to him, nature—in the form of naturalistic ornament—was a point of orientation: it enabled the viewer to engage the object and through it form a connection to the divine. The object became a quasi-intercessor. Ornament, then, could be an active agent in the apprehension of belief, and when ornament disappears, Bonne claims, belief correspondingly loses a mediator for its apprehension.²⁷ In his fundamental study, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Oleg Grabar demonstrated the multivalent nature of medieval ornament, emphasizing an approach inherently different from that of Bonne to the application and function of ornament in medieval art. I draw on both of these approaches and reconcile them, in this way garnering a more complete understanding of the significance of material in the Hamburg reliquary.²⁸

et médecine (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2004); and Bruno Reudenbach, "Wie Gott anfängt: der Genesis-Beginn als Formgelegenheit," in *Bilder, Räume, Betrachter: Festschrift für Wolfgang Kemp zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Steffen Bogen, Wolfgang Brassat, and David Ganz (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 16–33.

27. See Jean-Claude Bonne, "De l'ornement dans l'art médiéval: VIIIe–XIIe siècle; le modèle insulaire," in *L'image: fonctions et usages des images dans l'Occident médiéval; actes du 6e International Workshop on Medieval Societies, Centro Ettore Majorana (Erice, Sicile, 17–23 octobre 1992)*, Cahiers du Léopard d'Or 5, ed. Jérôme Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Léopard d'Or, 1996), 207–49; idem, "De l'ornement à l'ornementalité: la mosaïque absidiale de San Clemente de Rome," in *Le rôle de l'ornement dans la peinture murale du Moyen Âge: actes du colloque international tenu à Saint-Lizier du 1er au 4 Juin 1995*, ed. John Ottaway (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, 1997), 103–19; and idem, "Entre l'image et la matière: la chose du sacré en Occident," in "Les images dans les sociétés médiévales, pour une histoire comparée," ed. Jean-Marie Sansterre and Jean-Claude Schmitt, special issue, *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique belge de Rome* 69 (1999): 77–111.

28. See Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); James Trilling, *The Language of Ornament* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001); idem, *Ornament: A Modern Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); and the essays collected in Vera Beyer and Christian Spies, eds., *Ornament: Motiv–Modus–Bild* (Paderborn: Fink, 2012).



Figure 8. *Burkhardt Evangeliary*, Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MS M.P.Th.F. 68, back cover with *Maiestas Domini*, pierced and engraved copper-silver alloy, late eleventh century (photo: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY).

Attention to ornament also characterizes what remains of the late eleventh-century back cover of the eighth-century Burkhardt Evangeliary, which consists of a pierced sheet of a copper-silver alloy depicting Christ in a *Maiestas Domini* composition (Fig. 8).²⁹ A hemisphere bisects the lower half of a sphere that, in turn, encircles Christ. Symbols of the four evangelists surround this circular mandorla. Vegetal forms flank Christ's image, creating a play between background and foreground that resembles the totalizing nature of the Hamburg reliquary's decoration. On the cover of the Burkhardt Evangeliary, Christ is depicted as *Maiestas Domini*. The hemispherical form behind the central Christ was connected by Anton von Euw to the Calcidian diagrams depicting the fixed location of the stars that accompanied Plato's *Timaeus*, which survives in some examples from the eleventh century. In the

29. See Frauke Steenbock, *Der kirchliche Prachteinband im frühen Mittelalter: von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Gotik* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1965), 163–64; and Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things*, 225.

Maiestas Domini on the book cover, Christ's visage is visible within the outline of the metalwork.³⁰ The *In principio* page of the book of Genesis from the Bible of St. Hubert, dated about 1070, bears a resemblance to the cover of the Burkhardt Evangeliary in terms of the placement of the roundels in relation to the center, where a blessing Christ presides over the moment of Creation (Fig. 9). The similarity of the tendrils in the two works is most striking.³¹ At the center of the *IN* initial, where the two letters intersect, the letters alpha and omega flank the bust of Christ. Instead of the four evangelists at the edges of the Burkhardt Evangeliary, Christ is here surrounded by personifications of the four elements. As in the other examples discussed, the background is covered with opaque vegetal ornamentation, and the self-contained initial letters are superimposed in the foreground.

Like the other *In principio* pages, the initials in the Bible of St. Hubert evoke the moment of Creation. Here, however, the personifications of the elements suggest a different meaning, one that draws from scientific imagery. The account of creation described in Plato's *Timaeus* uses analytic and arithmetic tools to explain the origin of the world, which was interpreted through allegory in the Bible story of Genesis. As the only Platonic dialogue available in Latin in the early Middle Ages, the *Timaeus* was the most influential "scientific" explanation of creation in the European realm, and its importance rivaled that of the biblical tradition. In the *Timaeus*, the divine *artifex* creates, in accordance with mathematical conventions, the four elements—fire, air, water, and earth—out of primordial matter that was in a chaotic, amorphous state. These elements conjoin the human and cosmic bodies with the soul, bound together through mathematical relationships. In the St. Hubert *IN*, the four elements and the arithmetical formulas inscribed in each of their frames should be seen as documenting the narrative of proportional Creation.

30. See Anton von Euw, "Majestas-Domini-Bilder der ottonischen Kölner Malerschule im Licht des platonischen Weltbilds: Codex 192 der Kölner Dombibliothek," in von Euw and Schreiner, *Kaiserin Theophanu*, 379–98; and Herbert L. Kessler, "Hoc visibile imaginatum figurat illud invisibile verum': Imagining God in Pictures of Christ," in *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Papers from "Verbal and Pictorial Imaging, Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400–1000,"* ed. Giselle de Nie, Karl F. Morrison, and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 291–325. See also Kathrin Müller, *Visuelle Weltaneignung: astronomische und kosmologische Diagramme in Handschriften des Mittelalters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 29–93.

31. Harry Bober, "In Principio: Creation Before Time," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 13–28. See also Richard H. Putney, "Creatio et Redemptio: The Genesis Monogram of the St. Hubert Bible" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1985).

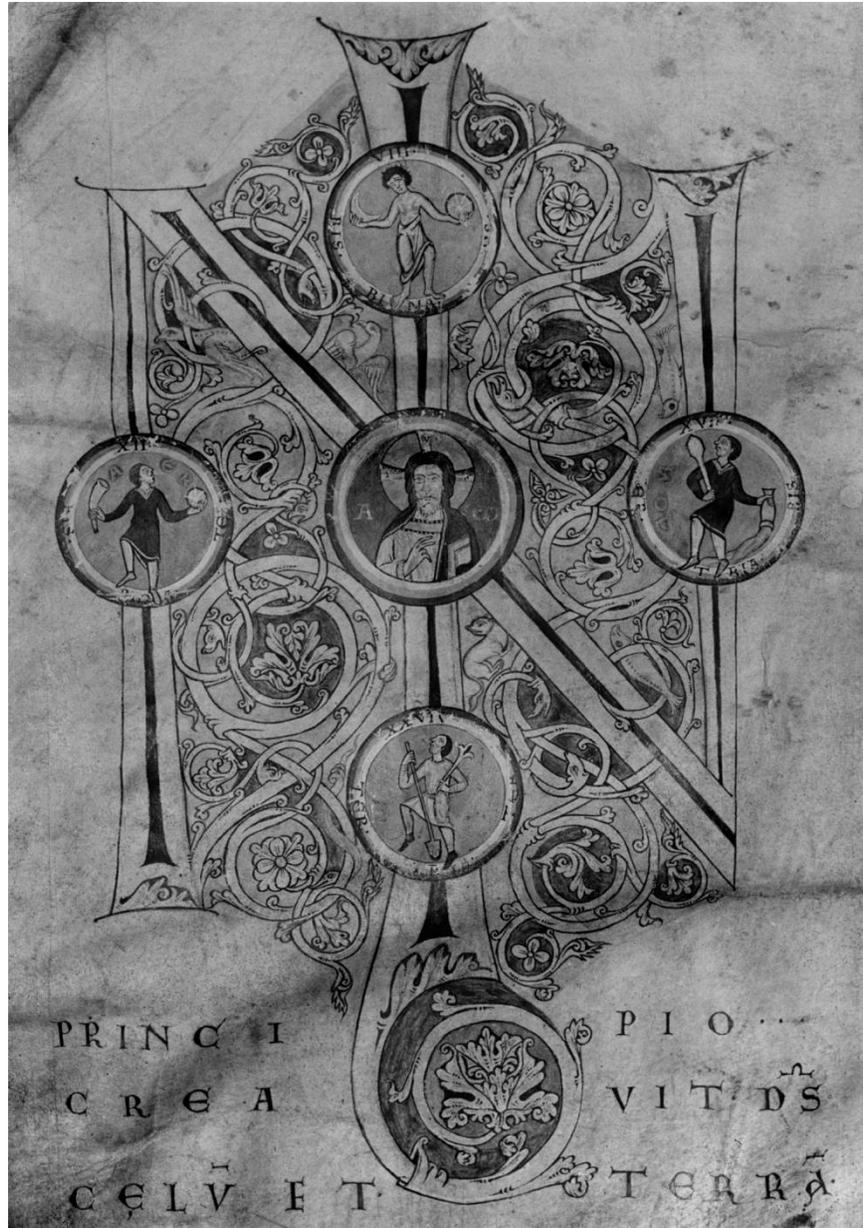


Figure 9. *St. Hubert Bible*, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert I, MS 36, fol. 6v, frontispiece to Genesis with bust of Christ and personifications of the four elements, ca. 1070 (photo: Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY).

Together with the bust of Christ, they designate the biblical Creation narrative as the perfect and temporal fulfillment of the Platonic narrative.³²

In the fourth century, Calcidius translated the *Timaeus* from Greek into Latin. When it came to translating Plato's

term for the primordial matter from which the four elements and subsequently the entire world arose, he selected the Latin word *substantia* to replace the Greek *hyle*, meaning matter. Calcidius then wrote an accompanying commentary, in which he replaced *hyle* with the Latin word *silva*. In doing so, he followed the partial translation made by Cicero some four centuries earlier, where the word *silva* substituted for

32. Rudolph, "In the Beginning."

hyle.³³ Yet the Latin *silva* has a far greater range of meanings than its Greek counterpart.³⁴ The polysemous *silva* was understood not only in the original Greek sense of primordial matter but also, and primarily, as “forest,” or as the leaves or foliage of trees. Through Calcidius’s commentary on the *Timaeus*, primordial matter morphed in meaning and was understood in the Latin West as a place that bore a broad range of cultural meanings.³⁵ This is a very peculiar moment in the history of an idea: a term came to signify something else and, simultaneously, to have polysemic significations. More than that: because Calcidius’s Latin translation was the way people in Europe in the Middle Ages were able to read Plato for well over a thousand years, the entire signification of the primordial matter of Creation might have been associated with the vast, unsettled territories of the European forests.³⁶ What emerged, I suggest, is a dense type of linguistic signification in which the term for the philosophical concept of incohesive matter at the same time represented an actual topographic locality. Thus, the term *silva* refers to an atemporal instant before the world was created, but it also designates a geographic and even a spatial location. Time and place were united through Calcidius’s translation.³⁷

33. Not much is known of Calcidius’s life. Because a dedication to Bishop Osius of Cordoba, the spiritual adviser to Constantine, has been found in one of the eleventh-century copies of the translation, some scholars have assumed that Calcidius operated in Spain in the mid-fourth century. Others disagree with this view, however, because Isidore of Seville’s enumeration of all Spanish writers fails to mention Calcidius. See Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 1:421–33.

34. Drawing heavily on an essay by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Jennifer P. Kingsley attempted to link the reception of the Calcidian translation at Hildesheim with the attitude toward the sense of touch in art produced under the patronage of Bernward of Hildesheim. Kingsley wrongly asserts that Calcidius used the term *silva* in the translation of the *Timaeus*; in fact, *silva* is used only in the accompanying commentary. It is the broad reception of the Calcidian commentary in German monasteries of the eleventh century that made the use of the term *silva* widespread. See Jennifer P. Kingsley, “To Touch the Image: Embodying Christ in the Bernward Gospels,” *Peregrinations* 3, no. 1 (2010): 138–73, http://peregrinations.kenyon.edu/vol3_1/current/Kingsley_Peregrinations_article.pdf.

35. See Paul Edward Dutton, “Medieval Approaches to Calcidius,” in *Plato’s Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, ed. Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 183–205.

36. Jacques Le Goff, “The Wilderness in the Medieval West,” in *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 47–59.

37. Peter Dronke, *The Spell of Calcidius: Platonic Concepts and Images in the Medieval West* (Impruneta: SISMELE, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008), 25–29. See also the recent contribution by Nancy van Deusen, *The Cultural Context of Medieval Music* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 83–104.

In a recent study, Anna Somfai argues that the eleventh century marked an apogee in the copying of Calcidius’s translation of the *Timaeus*.³⁸ The same period also produced the first copies of the Calcidian commentary, which circulated independently from the translation of Plato’s dialogue. According to Somfai, this increased the popularity of both Plato and Calcidius and also raised interest in concepts of creation. The textual transmission of the Calcidian text indicates that by the mid-eleventh century it was no longer read in only a few isolated centers; it had reached a larger audience. In monastic communities in the German-speaking world and beyond, the Calcidian commentary was considered to be a philosophical text on natural history that presented a valid supplement to the biblical story of Creation.³⁹

Book 13 of Calcidius’s commentary on the *Timaeus* centers entirely on the concepts underlying *silva*. In one passage, Calcidius discusses the qualities of *silva* as well as the historical traditions surrounding its articulation. One tradition, that of the Hebrews, deals specifically with the issue of ex nihilo Creation. Calcidius writes:

The Jews think *silva* was made. Their greatest sage, Moses, they say, relied on divine inspiration rather than on human eloquence. He begins his book, entitled *Genesis*, in this way, according to the version of the seventy wise men: “In the beginning God made heaven and earth. But earth was invisible and shapeless.” According to the version of Aquila the text runs: “As the head of all things, God founded heaven and earth; the earth was empty and nothing.” And according to Symmachus: “In

38. Anna Somfai, “The Eleventh-Century Shift in the Reception of Plato’s *Timaeus* and Calcidius’s *Commentary*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 65 (2002): 1–21. See also her other publications on Calcidius: eadem, “The Nature of Daemons: A Theological Application of the Concept of Geometrical Proportion in Calcidius’ *Commentary* to Plato’s *Timaeus* (40d–41a),” in *Ancient Approaches to Plato’s Timaeus*, ed. Robert W. Sharples and Anne Sheppard (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2003), 129–42; and eadem, “Calcidius’s *Commentary* to Plato’s *Timaeus* and its Place in the Commentary Tradition: The Concept of *Analogia* in Text and Diagrams,” in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen, and M. W. F. Stone (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2004), 1:203–20.

39. See Margaret Gibson, “The Study of the *Timaeus* in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Pensamiento* 25 (1969): 183–94; Gillian R. Evans and Alison M. Peden, “Natural Science and the Liberal Arts in Abbo of Fleury’s Commentary on the Calculus of Victorius of Aquitaine,” *Viator* 16 (1985): 109–27; and Rädle, “Calcidius und Paulus begründen ein Vermächtnis,” 328–49. Rädle argues for the borrowing of Calcidian terminology in the writings of Bernward of Hildesheim.

the beginning God founded heaven and earth: the earth lay inert, confused and disorderly.” But Origen asserts that the Jews convinced him that the translations differ greatly from the original text which reads: “But the earth was lying in speechless admiration.” In all this, they (the Jews) say, they agree that *silva*, underlying all bodies, was generated.⁴⁰

According to Calcidius, who here quotes different translations of the book of Genesis, at the time of Creation the world’s matter was drawn from *silva* rather than from emptiness. The Jews viewed the material from which the world was created as the Platonic *silva*. And so, Calcidius implies, in the beginning—in *principio*—there was *silva*. Thus, on the *In principio* folios discussed above, *silva*, arboreal ornament, not only lies at the beginning of time but also is what decorates the page that marks the physical beginning of the illuminated manuscript.⁴¹

The Hamburg reliquary, then, is pure ornament embedded in matter, and in many ways it is also pure matter shaped into ornament: the object is made entirely of *silva*. When engaging with the reliquary, the viewer seeks to peer through the rinceau scroll or, in another sense, pierce through the matter with his sight to the relics of the saint, whose resurrected body, by definition, lies beyond the material world, beyond the *silva*. In the later parts of book 13, Calcidius expands on his theory of matter, combining his own ideas with those of earlier writers, most notably Aristotle and Plato. According to Calcidius, “The first element of universal matter is *silva* unformed and without differentiation, in which intelligible

forms are molded, so that the world might exist.”⁴² *Silva* is everlasting and infinite; it has neither corporeal limitations nor spatial or temporal boundaries. Drawing heavily on Aristotle, Calcidius continues:

Of all these things we say that they exist in possibility, because their existence is presumed on account of this possibility, in the same way as we say that bronze is a possible statue, though at the moment it is still a shapeless metal. Thus it is a statue and it is not: it is a statue because it can become one, but it is not a statue because the realization has not yet taken place.⁴³

By means of the Aristotelian metaphor of the lump of bronze, Calcidius introduces the notion of potentiality to the concept of *silva*. He thus transforms a passive matter from which all things are created into a dynamic material and, at the same time, generates an immaterial concept that represents the ability of the inchoate *silva* to become the form of the world through the act of creation.

The incense smoke that emanates from the Berlin censer (Fig. 3) is, in a way, the form that comes from the formless matter. Like the *silva* in the *In principio* pages, the bronze alloy is the material potentiality of all forms. Dario Gamboni recently emphasized the ambiguous nature of those potential images as they appear, by natural causes, in marble, trees, plants, and other expressions of the animated qualities of inorganic and organic materials.⁴⁴ In many ways, *silva*, as a primordial inorganic material, also occupies this category. The bronze foliage of the Hamburg reliquary (Fig. 2) displays the same potentiality as the relics of the saint, which are material for the saint’s resurrection; both are intercessors between the material world of forms and the realms of the primordial and the divine. Bronze is potentiality, and the arboreal ornamentation emphasizes this to resurrect the material of the dead saint into new, living form. The openwork rinceau allows the viewer to come closer, visually, to the relics placed inside the reliquary and to envision the potentiality embodied within their receptacle, which at the moment of resurrection will re-

40. “Hebraei siluam generatam esse censent. Quorum sapientissimus Moyses non humana facundia sed diuina, ut ferunt, inspiratione uegetatus in eo libro, qui de genitura mundi censetur, ab exordio sic est profatus iuxta interpretationem septuaginta prudentium: Initio deus fecit caelum et terram. terra autem erat inuisibilis et incompta. Ut uero ait Acylas: Caput rerum condidit deus caelum et terram. terra porro inanis erat et nihil. Uel ut Symmachus: Ab exordio condidit deus caelum et terram. terra porro fuit otiosum quid confusumque et inordinatum. Sed Origenes adseuerat ita sibi ab Hebraeis esse persuasum, quod in aliquantum sit a uera proprietate deriuata interpretatio. fuisse enim in exemplari: terra autem stupida quadam erat admiratione. Omnia tamen haec in unum aiunt concurrere, ut et generata sit ea quae subiecta est uniuerso corpori silua, sermonesque ipsos sic interpretantur.” Latin text in *Timaetus a Calcidio Translatum Commentarioque Instructus*, Plato Latinus 4, ed. J. H. Waszink (London: Warburg Institute; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 276, 306, 280; translation adapted from J. C. M. van Winden, *Calcidius on Matter: His Doctrine and Sources; A Chapter in the History of Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 52–53.

41. On beginnings in Ottonian book illumination, see recently Joshua O’Driscoll, “Visual Vortex: An Epigraphic Image from an Ottonian Gospel Book,” *Word & Image* 27, no. 3 (2011): 309–21.

42. “Quippe primum elementum uniuersae rei silua est informis ac sine qualitate, quam, ut sit mundus, format intellegibilis species.” Plato, *Timaetus a Calcidio Translatum*, 285, 315, 289. Unless otherwise noted, translations from Waszink’s edition are mine.

43. “Quae cuncta possibilitate dicuntur esse praesumpta eorum existentia contemplatione possibilitatis: ut cum aes dicimus possibilitate statuam fore, cum adhuc metallum sit informe. Est ergo statua et non est. et est quidem, quia potest esse. non est autem, quia nondum effectus accessit.” *Ibid.*, 285, 315, 289. Translation after Winden, *Calcidius on Matter*, 188.

44. Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art* (London: Reaktion, 2002), 9–41.

vive the forms in the matter of the saint. Just as the letters on the *In principio* page of the Hezilo manuscript (Fig. 4) emanate from the ornament that is the primary matter of the *silva*, so, too, the relics of the saint will materialize and emerge through the bronze rinceau scrolls of the reliquary. The potentiality embedded in the material becomes entwined with the potentiality embedded in the relics of the saint or in the Word of God as it is incarnated on the illuminated page. The word on the page, the smoke wafting from the censer, and the relics breaking out of the reliquary, all are manifestations of divine spirit that are incarnated through matter in its primary sense—as *silva*.⁴⁵

The *silva* was represented as forest or foliage, a visual response and pictorial solution to the problem of depicting a philosophical concept that exists in a formless phase before forms are generated.⁴⁶ The ornamented backgrounds of the *In principio* pages can thus be understood as visual representations of the transformation from potentiality to tangible substance. The *In principio* initials, the saintly relics, and the censer smoke are all presented as if emerging from the background—from *silva*—into the foreground, the world. This is, in effect, a visual depiction of the opening of the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” In the fourteenth verse of that first chapter, the author of the Gospel continues, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Just as the divine creator made the world out of *silva*, the artist creates the illuminated world with unformed materials. Therefore, in accordance with the Calcidian understanding of *silva* as pure potentiality, the ornamentation signifies artistic ability, in addition to being an attribute of austere materiality. The study of Creation thus begins with ontology, where *ex nihilo* artistic creation, according to its Calcidian conception, is generated out of *silva*.

By translating the Greek term *hyle* as the more polysemic Latin *silva*, Calcidius single-handedly established a new tradition. Later writers, such as Isidore of Seville, followed him. Isidore states that the “Greeks call primary material *hyle*, which

is not formed in any way, but is capable of underlying all bodily forms,⁴⁷ and continues, “the poets have named it *silva*, not inappropriately, because *materia* [matter] is connected with woods” (quia materiae silvarum sunt). Isidore thus conceives of *silva* as Aristotelian potentiality; in other words, it is “capable of all forms” (corporalium formarum capacem).⁴⁸ When Isidore compiled his *Etymologies* in the early seventh century, he, like Calcidius, expressed uncertainty about the distinction between matter and forest. Plato’s *silva* and real forests became united, paving the way for artistic arboreal ornament to signify *silva* literally.

Calcidius’s *silva* is a prerequisite for creation; it is the true materiality of the world. At the end of book 13 of his commentary, after a thorough discussion of *silva*, Calcidius concludes:

An image, however, made by the artist’s hand and fashioned in conformity with the primary form, will fall short of its definite completeness if it has no *silva*. For a picture this is colors, for a sculpture, clay, bronze and other like materials. Thus, since the sensible forms are also images of the intelligible forms, as we have already often said, and since they derive their existence from the intelligible forms, not only their existence but also their likeness, they need, in my opinion, *silva* in order to arise in it and acquire existence in it.⁴⁹

Images and artifacts cannot be created without *silva*. In light of Calcidius’s writings, the foliage of the *silva* authenticates the creation of forms; *silva* becomes a requirement for the generation of art, a necessity for every artist who aspires to take part in the act of divine creation. The artist is then parallel to the

45. The potentiality of vision as it is present in Ottonian incipit pages has been explored recently in O’Driscoll, “Visual Vortex.”

46. In its essence, this study shows how transformations of philosophical ideas generate change in types and iconographies of image production; as such, it is linked to a few scholarly loci classici: Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: World Publishing, 1957); Peter Galison, “Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism,” *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (1990): 709–52; and Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, “Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept,” *American Historical Review* 105, no. 5 (2000): 1489–1533. See also Horst Bredekamp, “A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*,” *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 3 (2003): 418–28.

47. “[Hyle] Graeci rerum quandam primam materiam dicunt, nullo prorsus modo formatam, sed omnium corporalium formarum capacem, ex qua visibilia haec elementa formata sunt.” Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1850), 82: col. 473C. Translation adapted from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 272.

48. “Proinde et eam poetae silvam nominaverunt, nec incongrue, quia materiae silvarum sunt.” Migne, *PL* 82: col. 473C; Barney, *Etymologies*, 272.

49. “Imago enim ex arte facta et iuxta archetypam speciem effigiata nisi habeat siluam, si quidem erit pictura, colores, si autem fictura, limum uel aes ceteramque huius modi supellectilem, carebit certa perfectione. Igitur, quia sensiles quoque species imagines sunt specierum intellegibilium, sicut saepe iam diximus, et ab intellegibilibus substantiam trahunt, nec substantiam modo, sed etiam similitudinem, opus est his, opinor, silua, in qua fiant et substantiam sortiantur.” Plato, *Timaeus a Calcidio Translatum*, 349, 373, 341.

divine artist, God. Through *silva*, earthly and divine creations become entwined.⁵⁰

We now see how the *In principio* folios are sites of potentiality where the limitless *silva* depicts the amplitude of both creation and creator. The pages that follow in the manuscripts then become the matter after it has been shaped: they represent “creation out of something,” a shape made manifest through form as discussed in the *Timaeus*. The folios succeeding the *In principio* page become form that is embedded with, and made out of, *silva*. As an object, the physical manuscript is thus part of that *silva*, and the narrative the book conveys, with or without illuminations, is likewise part of the *silva*’s material structure. The *silva*, like consistent matter, runs through the illustrations and text of the entire manuscript.

Arboreal frames are often found in Ottonian manuscript illumination. Examples such as the one surrounding the Crucifixion folio in the Sacramentary of Henry II (r. 1002–14; Fig. 10),⁵¹ which is part of a sequence of dedicatory folios,

50. From the vast scholarship on the relation between divine and earthly creation, see especially Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: An Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); Peter Cornelius Claussen, “Früher Künstlerstolz: mittelalterliche Signaturen als Quelle der Kunstsoziologie,” in *Bauwerk und Bildwerk im Hochmittelalter: anschauliche Beiträge zur Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Karl Clausberg et al. (Giessen: Anabas, 1981), 7–34; Albert Dietl, “In arte peritus: zur Topik mittelalterlicher Künstlerinschriften in Italien bis zur Zeit Giovanni Pisanos,” *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 29 (1987): 75–125; and Anton Legner, *Der Artifex: Künstler im Mittelalter und ihre Selbstdarstellung* (Cologne: Greven, 2009), 126–66. See also the collected essays in John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols, eds., *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, 1982); Arne Moritz with Franz-Bernhard Stammkötter, eds., *Ars imitatur naturam: Transformationen eines Paradigmas menschlicher Kreativität im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2010); and Ittai Weinryb, “The Inscribed Image: Negotiating Sculpture on the Coast of the Adriatic Sea,” *Word & Image* 27, no. 3 (2011): 322–33.

51. On the Sacramentary, especially in the context of its production in the scriptorium of St. Emmeram in Regensburg, see Florentine Mutherich, “Die Regensburger Buchmalerei des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts,” in *Regensburger Buchmalerei: von frühkarolingischer Zeit bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, ed. Florentine Mutherich and Karl Dachs (Munich: Prestel, 1987), 23–38; Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 28–33; Gude Suckale-Redlefsen, “Prachtvolle Bücher zur Zierde der Kirchen,” in *Kaiser Heinrich II, 1002–1024*, ed. Josef Kirmeier (Stuttgart: Theiss, 2002), 60–61; Eliza Garrison, “Henry II’s *Renovatio* in the Pericope Book and Regensburg Sacramentary,” in *The White Mantle of Churches: Architecture, Liturgy and Art Around the Millennium*, ed. Nigel Hiscock (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 67–70; and eadem,

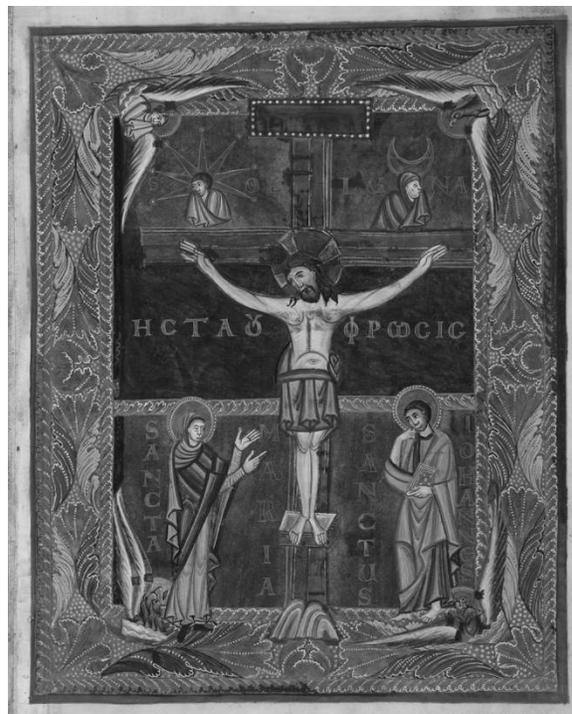


Figure 10. *Sacramentary of Henry II*, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 4456, fol. 21r, Crucifixion, early eleventh century (photo: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

are more than just stylistic and ornamental endeavors; they are conscious depictions of the materiality of painting, formless but tangible and real. Arboreal ornament, conceived as the primordial matter that forms the essence of all creation, is then utilized in turn to constitute an overarching framework that links every illumination back to the original act of Creation. The frontispiece to the same sacramentary represents the Hand of God descending to engage in the primordial act of Creation.⁵² The entire page is otherwise covered with dense arboreal decoration, or *silva*. *Silva* was part of the infrastructure of medieval theological creations in eleventh-century monastic culture. The *Timaeus* and, more important,

Ottonian Imperial Art and Portraiture: The Artistic Patronage of Otto III and Henry II (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 113–64.

52. See Cohen, *Uta Codex*, 27–38; Anne-Marie Bouché, “The Spirit of the World: The Virtues of the Floeffe Bible Frontispiece; British Library, Add. Ms. 17738, ff. 3v–4r,” in *Virtue and Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology, in association with Princeton University Press, 2000), 42–65; and Hamburger, “The Hand of God and the Hand of the Scribe.”

Calcidius's commentary on it supplied medieval thinkers with a prism through which to view the created world, and *silva* was its essence.⁵³

Bearing this in mind, let us look again at the Hamburg reliquary (Fig. 2). The phenomenon in the manuscripts that I described is also apparent here in the arboreal ornament, where the *silva* is made manifest as intricate matter that facilitates its perception. Toward the end of book 13, Calcidius notes, "There exists nothing more difficult to explain than *silva*, and this is why everything said about its nature, although said in full agreement with truth, is not expressed clearly and distinctly." *Silva*, he continues, is a "bodiless body, potentially a body but not actually and really a body."⁵⁴ *Silva* exists before it is made into form, and, as such, it is impossible to perceive. The *silva* as it is rendered in the Hamburg reliquary is a prerequisite to Creation. Just as the relics of a saint represent a potential whole, the reliquary itself has potentiality; its physical structure turns matter into form, simultaneously vivifying the material presence of the saint and allowing for the possibility of his or her return to full form at Christ's Second Coming. *Silva*, as represented in ornament, physically embodies the potential of abstract matter to become form again and of the dead saint to become reincarnate. In the form of bronze ornament on the Hamburg reliquary, *silva* refers to the status of bronze as primordial matter, and, at the same time, through the metaphor of the cast bronze as material that could remake the old body into the newly shaped statue of the resurrected body, it points to the revival of the relics resting inside the reliquary and the resurrection of the dead saint.⁵⁵

53. As Fidel Rädle recently noted, monastic scholars such as Bernward of Hildesheim and his successors there (including Hezilo) constantly engaged with the commentary of Calcidius, applying it to their own writings. Attitudes toward *silva* and the ideas of Creation, as filtered through the writings of Calcidius, were thus intrinsic to the monastic community of the eleventh century in monasteries such as Hildesheim. Rädle, "Calcidius und Paulus begründen ein Vermächtnis."

54. "Nec silua quicquam difficilium ad explanandum; ergo cuncta quae de natura eius dicta sunt mera praedita ueritate sunt nec tamen aperte dilucideque intimata . . . corpus incorporeum, ut possibilitate quidem sit corpus, effectu uero atque operatione nullum corpus." Plato, *Timaeus a Calcidio Translatum*, 322, 346, 317.

55. The potential resurrection of the saint's body becomes even more relevant when thinking of the ability of the cast-bronze work to generate likenesses. The eleventh century saw the rise of metalwork and casting for making reliquaries and tomb effigies. Several studies highlight the potentiality inherent in the material of bronze when dealing with the creation of likenesses: in chronological order, Ellert Dahl, "Heavenly Images: The Statue of St. Foy of Conques and the Signification of the Medieval 'Cult Image' in the West," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 3 (1978): 175–91; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western*

Bronze ornamented as *silva* was thus ornamented with potentiality, and this potentiality was, above all, living. In his commentary, Calcidius notes:

For [it is clear that such a soul of *silva* exists, because] divine wisdom and the intellect of the divine maker persuaded *silva* in a severe and effective way to behave patiently in regard to its adornment and decoration, and a patient behavior could only be imposed on animated and living beings.⁵⁶

In this manner Calcidius notes that *silva*, the primordial matter, was actually alive or animated before it was cast into forms. Living primordial matter was not just potentiality, acquiescent and passive, but also an animated entity. *Silva* was thus imbued with vital force, making the formless matter not inanimate *res* but actual living matter, preexisting before it was shaped into being as a form. Along these lines, our understanding of the selection of the word *silva* to designate primordial matter becomes even clearer: Calcidius chose the word that signifies chaotic but living matter. The forest—*silva*, that unconquered part of nature—was the entity that represented an animated, passive, but in-dwelted formless matter in the best possible way.

As the protomaterial from which everything is generated, *silva* was fundamental to image making in the eleventh century. Before the Aristotelian corpus was translated in the Latin West, Calcidius's commentary on the *Timaeus*, and his understanding of *silva*, was the most important philosophical text for conceptualizing being and creation and, to a cer-

Christianity, 200–1336 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 115–226; Thomas E. A. Dale, "The Individual, the Resurrected Body, and Romanesque Portraiture: The Tomb of Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg," *Speculum* 77, no. 3 (2002): 707–43; idem, "Romanesque Sculpted Portraits: Convention, Vision and Real Presence," *Gesta* 46, no. 2 (2007): 101–19; Beate Fricke, *Ecce fides: die Statue von Conques, Götzendienst und Bildkultur im Westen* (Munich: Fink, 2007), 206–48; and Bruno Reudenbach, "Observations on Body-Part Reliquaries," in *Romanesque Art and Thought in the Twelfth Century: Essays in Honor of Walter Cahn*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology, in association with Penn State University Press, 2008), 95–106. The material of wax, especially as it presents itself in seals, possesses connotations similar to concepts of similitude and resurrection. See here the groundbreaking work of Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity," as well as the chapters in eadem, *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

56. "cum divina sapientia intellegentiaque officis dei siluae seuer atque efficaciter persuaderet praeberere cultui atque exornationi suae patientiam, patientia uero non nisi animantibus uitaeque fruentibus adhibeatur." Plato, *Timaeus a Calcidio Translatum*, 300, 328, 302. Translation after Winden, *Calcidius on Matter*, 121.

tain extent, artistic production. With the development of the cathedral schools in the twelfth century, however, new translations of the *Timaeus* by William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres, among others, supplanted the Calcidian commentary.⁵⁷ These new commentaries either returned to the Greek meaning of the word *hyle* as primordial matter or simply translated it as the Latin word *materia*.⁵⁸ At the end of the twelfth century, with several translations of the Timaeian dialogue in circulation, some artists elected to represent formless matter by means of the inscribed word *Hile (hyle)*, using a textual substitution rather than a representational attempt at a troubling formless form (Figs. 11–12).⁵⁹

Silva nevertheless continued to be represented into the first quarter of the thirteenth century, when the multiple strategies that artists employed to depict the prime and formless matter became more diverse. In the Lothian Bible made at St. Albans, in England, an interest in *silva* is expressed in the greenish floral motif of the world before the heavenly dove descends to create the world of forms (to the lower left of the Trinitarian quatrefoil) and in the roundel depicting the second day, when Christ forms the world after having separated light from darkness (immediately below the quatrefoil) (Fig. 13). From the incoherent greenery of the *silva*, form is generated and is a prelude to the creation of flora on the third day, flora that seems to grow out of this roundel to unite the lower half of the page and all the days of Creation. The many ways of depicting the formless form continued even later in the Middle Ages.⁶⁰

In examining the *silva*, foliate ornament that traditionally has been understood as a locus for improvisation by the medieval artist, a place where his originality could be expressed, we find that it was in reality a category rich with dense philosophical meaning. In the ornamentation of formless matter the artist identified himself with the Divine Artist, aligning himself with the Maker in the moment of generating forms. Formless matter, whether *silva* or *prima materia*, presented both the divine and human *artifices* with a challenge to their creative skills. There was no codified iconography for representing formless matter. In this period, artists like the one who produced the Hamburg reliquary began consciously confronting and interacting with the potential of the raw and formless material of bronze. Bronze, more than any

other metal, has connotations that are fundamental to issues of potentiality and making, as evidenced by the Aristotelian metaphor of the lump of bronze as the ultimate example of material becoming form and, in a sense, becoming signified.

The role of materials and questions relating to materiality would benefit from a better understanding of the place of formless matter in the history of image making in medieval Europe. The materiality of the object or of the illuminated page has a direct, even if not always clear, connection to philosophical ideas about creation. Further study, beyond the scope of this essay, would expand our understanding of the particular signification of other substances as formless material for artistic creation. Metals such as gold and silver, gems, fibers, and pigments all have a place within the intellectual discourse that coalesced around notions of creation and signification in the monastic communities of eleventh-century Europe.⁶¹

Above all, the discourse of Creation was linked to the divine *artifex* as a creator of forms out of formless matter.⁶² Inasmuch as the efficacy of materials was related to their signification, as it could be understood through analysis of sacred texts and their exegeses and glosses, the most basic and fundamental attitudes toward materials came from their representation in formless matter. The representation of matter on the page or in an object alludes to the status of this material in a specific historic period and shows how *silva*, minerals as well as paint and bronze, was understood through the process of signification as living matter.⁶³ Returning to the primordial

61. From the ever-growing bibliography on gold, see Reudenbach, “Gold ist Schlamm”; on silver, Herbert L. Kessler, “The Eloquence of Silver: More on the Allegorization of Matter,” in *L’allégorie dans l’art du Moyen Âge: formes et fonctions; héritages, créations, mutations*, ed. Christian Heck (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 49–64; on gems, Sharon Farmer, “Low Country Ascetics and Oriental Luxury: Jacques de Vitry, Marie de Oignies, and the Treasures of Oignies,” in *History in the Comic Mode: Medieval Communities and the Matter of Person*, ed. Rachel Fulton and Bruce W. Holsinger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 205–22; and on color pigments, Spike Bucklow, *The Alchemy of Paint: Art, Science, and Secrets from the Middle Ages* (London: Marion Boyars, 2009).

62. See note 50 above.

63. On the use of metal ingredients for making paint for manuscript illumination, see S. M. Alexander, “Medieval Recipes Describing the Use of Metals in Manuscripts,” *Marsyas* 12 (1964–65): 34–51. Alexander’s primary examples come from the recipe book titled *Compositiones variae* (Lucca, Biblioteca capitolare, MS 490). On this Carolingian manuscript, see Luigi Schiaparelli, *Il codice 490 della Biblioteca capitolare di Lucca* (Roma: Sansavini, 1924); Rozelle Parker Johnson, *Compositiones variae, from Codex 490, Biblioteca Capitolare, Lucca, Italy, an Introductory Study* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939); Josef Svennung, *Compositiones Lucenses: Studien zum Inhalt, zur Textkritik und Sprache* (Uppsala: Lundequistska, 1941); and Adriano Caffaro, *Scrivere in oro: ricettari medievali e artigianato (secoli IX–XI): codici di Lucca e Ivrea* (Naples: Liguori, 2003).

57. Somfai, “The Eleventh-Century Shift.” Somfai identifies the eleventh century as the peak period for the copying of the Calcidian commentary.

58. The word *materia* could be translated as timber, but not forest, thus eliminating *silva*’s visual rendering as ornamented arboreal background.

59. Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 148.

60. *Ibid.*, 108, 125.



Figure 11. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 48, fol. 7v, frontispiece to Genesis with the six days of Creation, late twelfth century (photo: The Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.

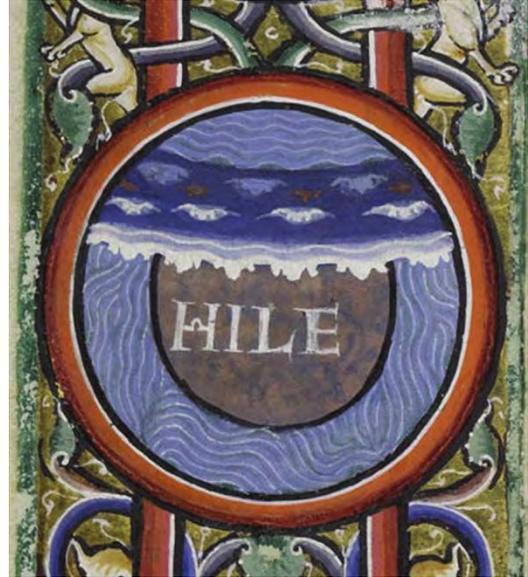


Figure 12. Detail of Figure 11, second day of Creation (photo: The Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge).

moment of Creation, the ur-moment when matter remained without signification but simultaneously had the necessity to be represented, helps explain how matter, maker, and textual translation together helped shape concepts about art making in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁶⁴

64. On animism, materiality, the organic, and their close relations, see, from a growing body of literature, Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 1–38; and Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 11–103. See also the essays in Jeremy Jerome Cohen, ed., *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects* (Washington, DC: Punctum/Oliphant, 2012); and Ittai Weinryb, “Beyond Representation: Things—Human and Nonhuman,” in *Cultural Histories of the Material World*, ed. Peter N. Miller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 172–86.

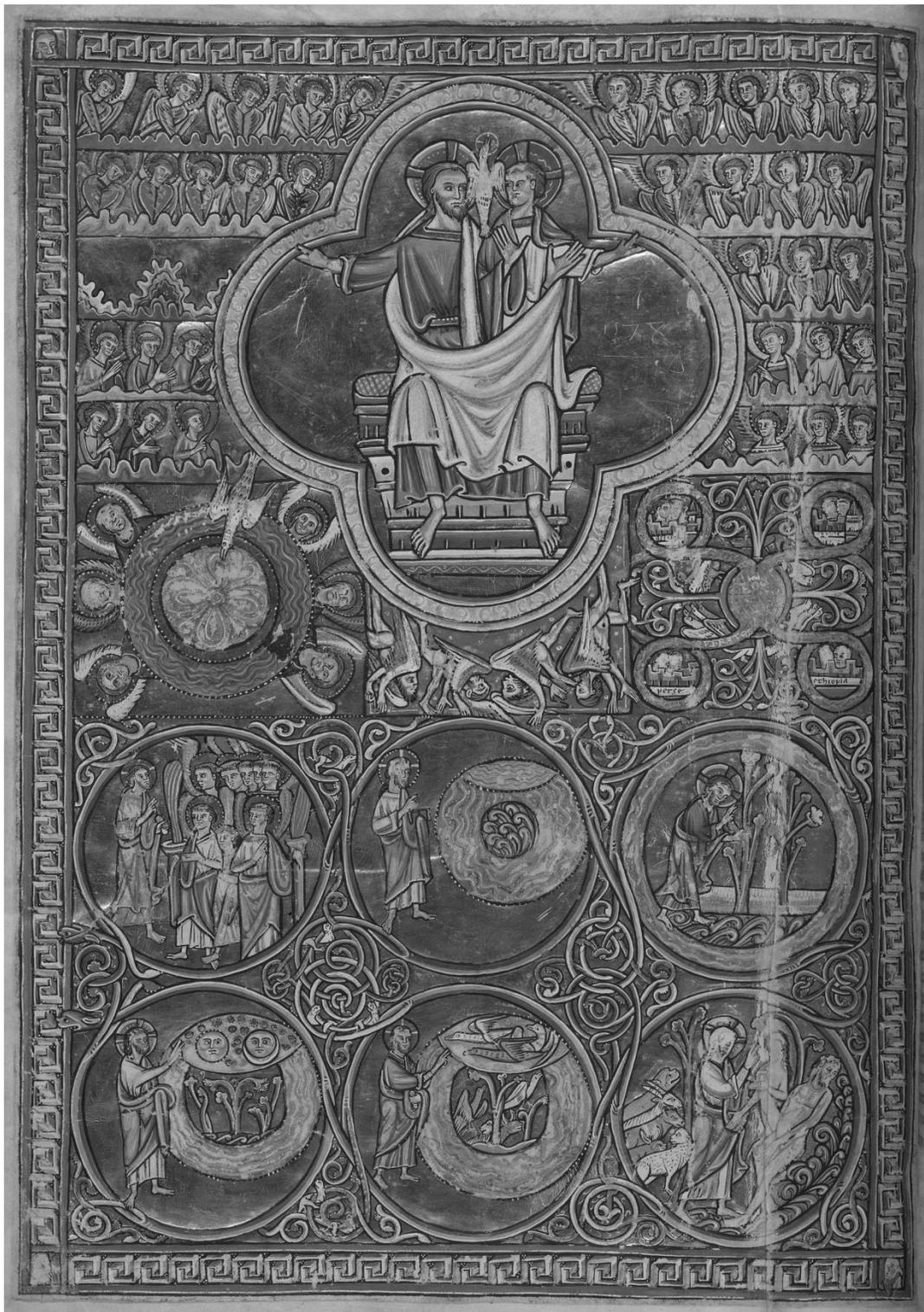


Figure 13. *Lothian Bible*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.791, frontispiece to Genesis, the Trinity with the six days of Creation, fol. 4v, first half of thirteenth century (photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library, NY [Gift of Philip Hofer]). See the electronic edition of *Gesta* for a color version of this image.