

Res et significatio: The Material Sense of Things in the Middle Ages*

ADEN KUMLER

University of Chicago

CHRISTOPHER R. LAKEY

Johns Hopkins University

Abstract

Influenced by typological exegesis and traditions of theological-philosophical speculatio, medieval people understood materials and material things as participants in powerful economies of signification. In his landmark 1958 essay, "Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes im Mittelalter" (On the Spiritual Sense of the Word in the Middle Ages), the cultural philologist Friedrich Ohly described the medieval meaning of things (Dingbedeutung) as authorized by modes of scriptural analysis but exceeding the boundaries of sacred texts to include monuments, artifacts, and materials. This essay serves as an introduction to Friedrich Ohly's life and work and offers an analytic orientation to the methodological and historical questions taken up by this special issue of Gesta dedicated to medieval conceptions of significationes rerum (the signification of things). Reflecting on both the insights and limitations of Ohly's penetrating account of medieval signification (the meaning of things in the world as expressed through words), the essay poses several art historical challenges to Ohly's vision of medieval works of art and architecture, while arguing for the continuing relevance of his thought for art historical consideration of the meaning of things in the Middle Ages.

In recent years, a series of important publications has offered new questions and interpretative proposals concerning the formative presence of materials and conceptions of materiality in medieval culture: medievalists, generally, and historians of medieval art and material culture, more specifically, seem to be having a materialist moment.¹ Across the disciplines, it has become difficult to think or talk about the Middle Ages without confronting the material *res*—be they materials, objects, or works of art and architecture—handled, literally and conceptually, by medieval people and, increasingly, by modern scholars. Indeed, in 2102 the programs of both the College Art Association Annual Conference and the International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo) revealed that materiality has emerged (or reemerged) as an important point of convergence among art historians working on the Middle Ages across a range of subfields and in relation to many different media.²

There is, perhaps, something painfully obvious about this material turn. Historians of medieval art and architecture, as

well as medieval archaeologists, have traditionally been sensitive to the material constitution and character of our chosen objects of study. Foundational art historical practices, such as connoisseurship, traditionally privileged modes of attention to the material specificity of works of art, stressing the significance of the choice of materials, of facture, and of physical condition as crucial criteria in the dating, localization, authentication, and—more broadly—interpretation of works of art. Art historians, in this sense, have always been “materialists,” if by that qualifier we intend not any specific ideological or conceptual commitment or account but, rather, a more general, and various, interest in historical works still present to us by virtue of their enduring, material forms.

Nonetheless, for several decades art historical and medievalist interest in models of vision and visibility have privileged the optical over the tactile. This emphasis has yielded important insights into medieval visual culture and the interplay between devotion, theology, ideology, and the languages of power, organized in relation to issues of visibility, visuality, and visionary experience.³ Questions concerning the role of the material in medieval visual economies did not cease to be posed, but they were often pursued either as heuristic auxiliaries to arguments focusing on medieval forms of visuality or else were elaborated, more narrowly, in relation to specific historical practices, not least the phenomenon of *spolia*.⁴ The present rediscovery of medieval materiality, material culture, and the materials of medieval art making is an exciting development, but it must be acknowledged it is also, in certain respects, a return to foundational categories of art historical analysis, indeed of historical analysis, writ large. And this material turn among medieval art historians has a strangely belated quality, for it follows in the wake of several decades of preoccupation with materiality, materialism, objects, and things among scholars in adjacent disciplines and periods.

Indeed, scholars in other periods—particularly scholars working on literature and the history of science and technology—have developed an extensive set of analyses in relation to materials and materiality for some time.⁵ Following the landmark new historicist accounts of Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, literary, cultural, and social historians have

foregrounded the presence and significance of things, objects, and materials in their primarily textual objects of study.⁶ From the mode of analysis pioneered by Bill Brown under the rubric “thing theory”⁷ to “new new historicist” investigations of clothing, food, and stage props, historians of literature and culture have mapped the “foreign country” of the past as a landscape populated by objects and things.⁸ Yet, strangely enough, many such accounts would seem to describe an object universe in which the category of the material does important work but remains paradoxically intangible: a specter conjured by scholarly prose, uncannily free from dimension, weight, heft, and surface values. Things (*res*), objects, and materials in these analyses, at times, seem to be made of counterfactual stuff, divested of precisely those properties that art historians recognize as constituting historical objects and monuments as difficult, compelling, and specific presences, potentially charged with meaning, not as a surplus value, but as a direct and irreducible effect of their materiality and facture.

How, then, might object- and monument-focused accounts of medieval *res* and *significatio* (thing and meaning) be pursued anew by art historians invested in understanding how matters and materials mattered in the Middle Ages? This special issue of *Gesta* proposes a variety of responses to that question by way of a detour in a seemingly paradoxical direction: the critical account of medieval *Dingbedeutung* (thing-signification) developed by the German philologist Friedrich Ohly (Fig. 1). Emerging, in part, from a session at the 2012 College Art Association’s annual conference devoted to the topic of *res et significatio*, or the material sense of things in the Middle Ages, the essays that follow respond to an invitation to take Ohly’s analysis of thing-signification in the Middle Ages as a point of departure for their own explorations of how materials, material things, or materiality per se made meaning in the Middle Ages.

Ohly’s work offers a powerful account of how *res* and *significatio* were understood to exist in a dynamic, shifting, profoundly creative, and even salvific relation during the Middle Ages. His explorations of medieval hermeneutic economies provide an epiphanic perspective on the interdependence and mutual illumination of object and logos, thing and theology, physical qualities (or properties) and the transformative power of metaphor, allegory, even anagogy in medieval culture. Ohly, we suggest, is a philologist (taking that term extensively, as he intended it) whom medieval art historians should be reading, perhaps now more than ever.

Friedrich Ohly (1914–1996), Curriculum Vitae

From 1932 until 1944 Ernst Friedrich Ohly studied Germanics, Greek philology, and history at the universities of Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, and Königsberg.⁹ His teachers and mentors included the distinguished Latin philologist Otto Schumann; Paul Hankamer, the eminent literary critic and historian of German literature; and Julius Schwietering, a pioneer in the field of modern folklore studies. Ohly was compelled to



FIGURE 1. Friedrich Ohly (photo: Christoph Preker; courtesy of Bildarchiv Joachim Hilpert, Münster).

abandon his studies at Königsberg in 1936 after he galvanized a group of students to protest the firing of his adviser, Hankamer, who had “participated in various forms of resistance” to the Nazi Party in Germany.¹⁰ For his actions, Ohly was brought before the National Socialist–controlled student body, was deprived of his financial support, and asked to leave the school. Returning to his home city of Frankfurt, Ohly undertook the writing of his dissertation—an investigation of the sources and structure of the *Kaiserchronik*—under Schwietering.¹¹

Granted the PhD in 1938, Ohly was drafted in 1940, and in 1944, on a medical leave to recover from a non-war-related injury that resulted in the loss of one of his eyes, he completed his *Habilitationsschrift* under Schwietering’s care in Berlin. According to Christel Meier, his *Habilitation*, charting the historical tradition of Song of Songs exegesis from Late Antiquity to the start of the thirteenth century, “demonstrated a significant distance from ideological tendencies” of its moment,¹² revealing Ohly’s commitment to understanding both medieval typology and vernacular allegory within a broader history of the biblical tradition.¹³ Following his *Habilitation* lecture, at

which his work was denounced by the Nazi supporter and literary scholar Frank Koch for its inclusion of the work of Jewish scholars, Ohly was recalled to active service and sent to the eastern front in 1944.¹⁴ In the same year he was taken prisoner in Rumania and interred in a Russian work camp for nine years.

During his time as a prisoner of war, Ohly taught himself the language of his captors using a Russian-German dictionary obtained surreptitiously from a bookstore while he was in Stalingrad as part of a forced work crew. As the memorial notice in *Speculum* recounts, with this bilingual dictionary in hand, Ohly “began one of several feats of thwarting the inhumanity of the prisoner-of-war camp with humanistic activity.”¹⁵ Indeed, while a prisoner, not only did Ohly translate Pushkin and Lermontov into German, but he also collaborated on a poetic anthology with a fellow prisoner, the classicist Heinrich Dörrie. Together they solicited contributions from the memories of other prisoners, transcribing recited verse ranging from Homer to contemporary German satire on paper sacks that had held cement. From this cement sack exemplar other manuscript copies were made, written on cigarette paper, bound with scraps of prison clothes, and circulated as small, hand-held volumes among the prisoners. Later in life, Ohly would say that during the years of his imprisonment, it was poetry, as much as food, water, and shelter, that kept him alive.¹⁶

Finally repatriated in 1953—after refusing to work for the Communists in Germany, a decision that would have shortened his sentence considerably—Ohly became associate professor at the University of Frankfurt in 1954, after first accepting a lectureship there. In 1956 he came to the United States as a visiting assistant professor of Germanics at the University of Chicago, returning to Germany in 1958 as a full professor at Kiel. On the occasion of his inauguration at Kiel, Ohly delivered the groundbreaking lecture “Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes im Mittelalter,” now available in two English translations.¹⁷ In this text Ohly delineated the contours and aims of the scholarly project that would occupy him until his death in 1996.

Employing a comparativist approach to historical philology and allegory, Ohly elucidated the medieval doctrine of significance (*significs*)—the meaning of things in the world as expressed through words—as a central hermeneutic enterprise and object of study for interdisciplinary medieval studies. Leaving Kiel for Münster in 1964, Ohly established the influential research group Der Sonderforschungsbereich 7 (Mittelalterliche Bedeutungsforschung) with the historian Karl Hauck in 1968.¹⁸ This research group was based in the Institut für Frühmittelalterforschung (founded by Hauck in 1964) until 1985 and provided an institutional and intellectual home for Ohly’s community of students and colleagues as they pursued the ambitious project sketched in Ohly’s inaugural Kiel lecture into new fields, including theology, the natural sciences, and art history. The results of these projects were published in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, which remains an active repository of groundbreaking work on art history and medieval studies more generally.¹⁹

A sense of communal activity—forged, no doubt, while imprisoned in Rumania and poignantly epitomized by the compilation of the poetry anthology written on cement sacks—propelled Ohly to investigate new avenues of research in medieval signification as a humanistic activity. In his own words, for a philologist, “the enduring dialogue in history about what is enduringly human” revealed “in the arts possibilities of human existence becoming reality, in forms charged with meaning.”²⁰ Ohly’s students continue to develop his vision for a thoroughly interdisciplinary cultural philology in new fields of research and in new collaborative projects that have borne fruit in a series of works, including the *Handbuch der Farbenbedeutung im Mittelalter*, edited by Christel Meier-Staubach and Rudolf Suntrup, and the *Lexikon der Mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen*, edited by Heinz Meyer and Suntrup, that attempt to collate and make available to scholars vast semantic fields organized in relation to major medieval topoi.²¹ At Münster, and by way of the continuing influence of his writings, Ohly’s dream of the “renewal of philology” as an aesthetic science (*Kunstwissenschaft*) remains an ongoing project, and one in which art historians might yet play an important part.²²

Friedrich Ohly’s Sense of Things

Over the course of a long career, Ohly mined medieval sources, largely textual, for what they might tell us about the period’s conception of *Dingbedeutung*, the signifying potential or actualized meaning of *res*, taken expansively to include materials and objects, but also what we might ordinarily identify as the properties of things: number, color, taste, tactile character, and so on.²³ To invite medieval art historians to consider and respond critically to Ohly’s thought as a point of departure for more focused, local examinations of how materials—and materiality—mattered meaningfully in the Middle Ages, provokes the question: What does the work of a German philologist, deeply invested in traditions of textual exegesis, offer the practice of art historical interpretation? The essays that follow pose this question implicitly or explicitly and respond to it variously. In this introduction, we take stock, if all too summarily, of the contours, stakes, and insights offered by Ohly’s understanding of medieval signification, specifically as it engages the question of how *res* participate in a larger medieval economy of *significatio*.

Ohly’s account of medieval signification is propelled primarily by what he uncovered in medieval texts belonging to a tradition of scriptural exegesis, broadly construed, dating back to the patristic era. Among the works of Hrabanus Maurus, pseudo-Hrabanus, Adam Scotus, Richard of St. Victor, Hugh of St. Victor, Hugh of Folieto, Alain de Lille, and Peter of Poitiers (to name just a few of Ohly’s sources), he found a sustained commitment not only to an exegesis of words but also to an exegesis of the things (*res*) to which they referred. Attending closely to this ambitious textual tradition of exegesis, in medieval texts Ohly discovered a shared project to elucidate both

sacra scriptura and those divinely authored *creatura* that make up the natural world. In the Middle Ages, Ohly revealed, it was not only sacred writ but also the flora, fauna, minerals, and elements—spelled out in the letters of sacred scripture but no less phenomenally present in the lived experience of medieval thinkers—that signified spiritually.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Ohly's clear-sighted and compelling reading of his exegetical, encyclopedic, and literary sources. While medievalists before and after Ohly had recognized the profound influence of metaphors of textuality in medieval culture—one need only recall Ernst Robert Curtius' magisterial essay "The Book as Symbol" in his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*—it was Ohly who fully articulated the persistent, irreducible presence of the material within metaphoric, semiotic, and theological conceptions of the *verbum* or *vox* in the Middle Ages.²⁴ Quoting Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173), Ohly insisted that for medievals, "non solum voces, sed et res significativae sunt" (not only the sound of words, but things carry meaning).²⁵ Taking this precept seriously, Ohly's analysis foregrounded the connection between text and world that animated not only medieval reading and exegetical elaboration of scripture but also the manifold ways in which medievals understood the world to be implicated in privileged texts and—no less—the natural world to be available for exegesis in a complex, sacredly signifying manner.

The axiom *res significativae sunt* led Ohly's chosen sources to insist on the irreducible material character of the things referenced by scriptural *voces*. Accordingly, they invited their audiences to a sustained, empirical engagement with these *res*, signified verbally by words but also encountered as empirical presences in the world. This was a mode of creative hermeneutics, Ohly argued, with powerful spiritual implications in the Middle Ages. So, as Ohly elucidated, for medievals the sound of the word (its *vox*), referring literally to a thing in the world (e.g., a stone), could, in that act of reference, redirect the listener or reader to an actual, material *res* in the world (a physical rock) possessed—in its own right—of *significatio*, even, in Ohly's terms, of a *sensus spiritualis*.²⁶ Working from verbal sound to its notional referent and from that referent to the named thing as it is present as a material *res* in the world, medieval exegetes and their audiences cultivated an apprehension or apperception of *significationes* located beyond the phonemic presence of the word and its conventional mode of reference or evocation. In Ohly's account, this hermeneutic engagement with things—framed but not coterminous with an exegetical immersion in the language of scripture—was a profoundly medieval undertaking. It was, he wrote, "the task of the Middle Ages to reveal the meaning of the essence of things comprehended in this manner."²⁷

This mode of semiotics was hardly an invention of the twelfth century, the period from which Ohly derived so many of his textual authorities. Its fundamental operation—the hermeneutic conjoining of world and writ—was programmatically set forth by Augustine in a locus classicus not only of the medieval

exegetical tradition but also of modern scholarship. Exhorting his readers to the "knowledge of things" as well as the "knowledge of signs,"²⁸ Augustine described the empirical world as an essential intertext for Christian understanding of scripture:

Ignorance of things makes figurative expressions unclear when we are ignorant of the qualities of animals or stones or plants or other things mentioned in scripture for the sake of some analogy. The well-known fact about the snake, that it offers its whole body to assailants in the place of its head, marvelously illustrates the meaning of the Lord's injunction to be as wise as serpents [Matt. 10:16], which means that in place of our head, which is Christ [Eph. 4:15], we should rather offer our body to persecutors, lest the Christian faith were killed within us, if sparing our body we deny God. . . . Just as a knowledge of the habits of the snake illuminates the many analogies involving this animal regularly given in scripture, so too an ignorance of the numerous animals mentioned no less frequently in analogies is a great hindrance to understanding. The same is true of stones, herbs, and anything that has roots. . . . Nor on any other grounds is it easy to understand that unbroken peace is signified by the olive branch brought by the dove when it returned to the ark [Gen. 8:11], unless we know that the smooth surface of oil is not easily broken by another liquid and also that the tree itself is in leaf all year round.²⁹

Focused on a rigorous mode of reading scripture, in this passage Augustine does not urge his audience simply to find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."³⁰ Instead, a thinking, pedagogical engagement with the physical, created world is promoted as a kind of auxiliary discipline, enlisted to exegetical aims. The Augustinian precept that observation and knowledge of *creatura* are essential to the reading of scripture, with all that entails in moral and spiritual terms for the Christian community, nonetheless laid an influential foundation for appropriation of the natural world as a kind of material and phenomenal text by later medieval exegetes. It is that subsequent hermeneutic move, from an exegesis of scriptural *voces* for things to an exegesis of the things themselves, that fascinated Ohly and elicited his own scholarly exegesis.

If reading scripture's nouns in context was difficult work, demanding rigorous hermeneutic protocols, as Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* (397–426) and *De Genesi ad litteram* (401–15) dramatize, what would it mean to read a divinely authored world in which things might not simply exist but also communicate? Contrary to many modern habits of thought, for medieval exegetes, the problem was not so much the opaque literality of the material world but its potentially overwhelming polysemy, as read through the lenses of scriptural citation, typological argument, etymology, analogy, and allegory. Ohly elucidated medieval perceptions of the potential hermeneutic polysemy of

a given *res* by way of the inventory of the twelve *significationes* of *lapis* (stone) found in the *Distinctiones monasticae*: “The stone is said to be Christ, and the virtue of the angel, and the bride of Christ, a just man, justice, the carnal sense, and wicked behaviour, a grievous sin, an evil spirit, a false Jew, a true gentile.”³¹ Lest we assume, as so many before Ohly had, that the hermeneutic at work in this passage amounted to a more or less mechanistic or reductive “A signifies B” coding or decoding that began and ended in the world of the noun, Ohly—together with his medieval authorities—insisted:

The signification of a thing at a given moment is determined by the property of [the] thing which is brought into play, and the context in which the particular word appears. The signification of the word is exhausted with regard to the thing. The thing, on the other hand, has a universe of signification, which stretches from God to the devil and which is potentially present in everything which is designated by a word.³²

If the conjunction of letters forming the written word or the spoken sound “lapis” is readily accounted for, or “exhausted,” in a gesture of reference to a lithic *res*, according to Ohly the medieval signification of *res* is radically extensive, at least *in potentia*.

As Ohly gestured toward a medieval world of words and things mutually implicated in a potentially infinite regress of signification, he also emphasized the protocols governing this hermeneutic project, limits defined by contingent contexts and material and phenomenal characteristics—the invoked properties of things (*die am Dinge herangezogene Eigenschaften*)—that restrain interpretation from an abyss of free, indefinitely extended association. Ohly emphasized the determinative role played by properties in the economy of thing-signification (*significatio rerum*) via Peter of Poitiers (ca. 1130–1205): “Indeed, as many properties as every *res* possesses, so many utterances [*linguas*] suggesting something spiritual and invisible to us does it have, according to whose diversity even acceptance of the name [*or noun; nominis*] itself varies.”³³ Crucial empirical and hermeneutic criteria, the properties of things delimit the “mute” predication of *creatura* and the abstractive play of exegesis.³⁴ The correspondence between the naming of the *res* and its apparent (or invisible) qualities and the sharing of certain properties (such as color or taste) among different *res*—all these characteristics of the *res* play a part in the revelation of the material sense of things within the exegetical tradition explored by Ohly. So too, he suggested, the exegete’s privileging of certain properties over others in the descriptive constitution of a *res* is itself a form of artful agency, a bringing “into play” of certain sensible characteristics or behaviors of a *res* that does crucial, creative hermeneutic work.³⁵

Thus the medieval theory and practice of *significatio rerum* that Ohly elucidated is a mode of signification or meaning inseparable from the specific being of things themselves,

a signification generated or predicated in relation to the material, visual, tactile, even gustatory specificity of each *res*, mediated by exegesis, and guaranteed by a divinely authored cosmos. Within this dizzying, even intoxicating economy of thing-signification, Ohly repeatedly draws our attention to a form of medieval hermeneutical ascesis that starts from close observation or description of the material *res* before proceeding to its world of meaning. Citing the Anonymous of Clairvaux, Ohly offers a glimpse of this interpretative practice as it engages the material *res* of “dew”: “Dew descends invisibly, cools, fructifies; clear, sweet; with moderate warmth it dries up; softens the earth, pleases the seed; flows at night and in silence, bit by bit and here and there.”³⁶ Here an inventory of the properties, qualities, and phenomenal character (or behavior) of dew acts as a kind of thesaurus: a collection of verbal predicates and a treasury of latent *significationes*. Framed by Ohly’s wide-ranging and still, we would suggest, fresh perspective, the anonymous medieval exegete’s *ekphrasis* of a cool, translucent drop of water in the world anticipates the search for words to describe things that lies at the heart of art historical practice.

Twelfth-century texts dominate Ohly’s corpus of exegetical sources, but the hermeneutic phenomenon he investigates continued. Indeed, we find a new formulation of the underlying notion of the legibility and signification of the material world, couched in recognizably Aristotelian terms, in Robert Grosseteste’s thirteenth-century commentary on Ecclesiasticus 43: 1–5:

since the species and forms and figures of things are like a kind of writing, and the sensible causes, up to the reasons [*rationes*] in the divine mind, are like certain spoken words, the *speeded course* [Ecclesiasticus 43:5] is in the words of the sun because in the forms, figures and species impressed by the sun, or drawn out through its efficacy, a course to the visible causes is prepared for human intelligence and inquiry, as if in its word, by ascending in sequence to the *invisible things of God that are clearly seen, being understood through those visible things that were made* [Romans 1:20].³⁷

Like Hugh of St. Victor and Peter of Poitiers before him, the bishop of Lincoln affirms the hermeneutic power of visible things in a divinely created world. Employing a model of apperception as well as a technical vocabulary derived from contemporary discussions of optics, *perspectiva*, and Aristotelian natural philosophy, Grosseteste describes a world illuminated by sunlight into startling, spiritually ascendant legibility.

Over the course of his career, Ohly drew on a range of textual sources, not simply the Latin exegetical tradition magisterially elucidated in his inaugural lecture at Kiel but also traditions of vernacular commentary and poetic composition, in order to develop an expanded practice of philology, capable of responding to the complexity, creativity, and beauty of medieval significs.³⁸ Nonetheless, one cannot fail to remark on the role played by a divine *auctor* in implicitly or explicitly guaranteeing the

semantic plenitude and polyvalence of scripture and the world alike within the tradition of thinking about *Dingbedeutung* that Ohly rediscovered.

But what of works made by human hands in this economy of material meaning? While Ohly paid serious attention to natural materials often encountered in works of art and material culture, including important studies of the pearl in medieval thought and literature (as Beate Fricke discusses in her contribution to this issue), and while he advocated a more expansive vision of medieval typology that recognized extrabiblical forms of typological argument and allegoresis, he consistently hewed to a classically exegetical line, focusing on natural *creatura* rather than the creations of the artist or artisan. There is good reason, however, to believe that medievals may not have been as circumspect in their choice of exegetical objects.

To take but one illuminating example: the Middle French text *Les nouueletez du monde* invites its audience to meditate seriously on the significance of seemingly trivial newfangled things: buttoned robes and multicolored stockings.

by the robes with which bodies, which are instruments for doing all works, are clothed, we understand the holy occupations and the good works that a reasonable creature—that is, man—must do to please his creator and to purchase an eternal reward. And by the buttoning of the robe, which is open in the back and sits on top of [the other] robe, we understand the vanity and pleasure-taking of the world, with which the devil buttons up the works of those men and women who strive more to please the world or some creature with their works, than their creator. . . . by the colored stockings, with which legs and feet—which are man's lowest extremity [*la derreniere partie*] and by which he is joined to the earth—are clothed and hosed, we understand the remembrance of death. And as a sign of this, the socks that men were commonly wont to wear used to be black. But nowadays, they are colored with diverse colors. By this we understand the delights, riches and honors of the world, that take from man the remembrance of death and of the judgment of conscience [*l'avisement*], as well as the proper pursuit [*l'adrement*] of his salvation.³⁹

Created not by God but by skilled artisans, the objects subjected to a moralizing exegesis in this vernacular tract are banal, quotidian things. To take them seriously, as the text does, is to recognize an expanded field of materialist hermeneutics, a medieval vision of the world in which not only *creatura* but also *artifecta* and *ornamenta* might signify, even in tropological or soteriological terms.

Ohly's Vision of Medieval Art

For Ohly—as, perhaps, for many art historians—the challenge and pleasure in studying medieval artworks lie in their

hermetic character. At times, medieval works may puzzle us iconographically, yet their sensual properties and facture demand our attention and invite us to examine how materials, forms, and subject matter collaborate in generating complex economies of presence and meaning. It was this attraction and difficulty of medieval art that Ohly evocatively characterized “as the charm of both seductive promise and hermetic denial.”⁴⁰

Given this recognition of both “promise” and “denial” in encountering medieval works, it is worth asking what challenges or difficulties works of art posed for Ohly's understanding of signification and, by the same token, what limitations (as well as analytic promise) an engagement with his thought involves for art historians. How, for example, can we reconcile Ohly's characterization of visual and material forms as modes of semantic reference and his relative disinterest in how such forms signified through their pictorial or spatial presence? What are we to make of Ohly's privileging of forms that are readily elucidated by reference to textual sources, and his relative neglect of forms that signify otherwise, either by a kind of autonomous predication or else primarily by intervisual or intermaterial means? Then, too, what are we to make of his argument concerning colors as properties *of* things and *not* things themselves, a vision of color that necessarily led Ohly to neglect those cases in which pigments or other incorporated colored elements signify intervisually or intermaterially across different works of art or even within a single polychromatic or mixed-media object? In short, can Ohly's thought contribute to our understanding of those works of art and material culture that produce meaning—or presence as meaning—in ways that diverge from textual traditions of exegesis and allegoresis?

We raise this point not to rehash disciplinary debates (i.e., formalism vs. iconography) but, rather, to pose an urgent question facing art historians, if we are to take seriously a cultural philologist's view of how medieval *res* mean: What place is there for artful objects, made by human hands, in Ohly's account of medieval thing-signification? Can we attend to the material, pictorial, haptic, and spatial properties of objects and monuments in relation to questions of signification without always turning to texts as a privileged means of elucidating historical meaning? What can objects and monuments tell us about the construction of meaning in the Middle Ages if we are unwilling to read them as substitutes for or subordinates of texts?

Our authors variously touch on a number of issues that emerge from an art historical engagement with Ohly's writings, issues that warrant foregrounding here. First, as Christina Normore and Beate Fricke explore variously, the relation of words to images and objects and, more particularly, the semantic control words are understood to exert over images. Second, the idea that works of art were a means to a spiritual end and the relative neglect of the meaning(s) they encode as autonomous, aesthetic objects, questions that Herbert Kessler and Amy Powell consider further. And third, Ohly's reservations regarding

not only formalism per se but also contemporary interpretations produced under the aegis of iconology, a hermeneutic stance that distinguishes him from his contemporary Erwin Panofsky in several respects.⁴¹

That Ohly was alert to these methodological issues is evident in a published lecture on typology in which he voiced the following assessment of art historical understanding of typology in medieval art:

Almost all the arts in the Middle Ages, from illumination, the art of the goldsmith, sculpture, and architecture to stained glass—and some even right down to the nineteenth century—reckon typological material among their subjects and developed some *forms* by which to represent it. *Art history* has not yet gone beyond iconographic study to make a systematic study of the possibilities of the *language of forms* by which typological connections are made visual.⁴²

This remark reveals an interesting tension in Ohly's thought regarding the recursive relationship between "the language of forms" and meaning. Throughout his writings a peculiar concept continually arises when he speaks about this relation: the notion of visible and material works of art as mute forms. To take one example, in the introductory passages of his seminal account of medieval signification in the work of Hugh of Folieto, he claims that in medieval art, "what is visible to the senses is a sign for something invisible that expresses itself mutely in what is visible."⁴³ This concept is critical for Ohly in establishing an inextricable bond between artistic forms—be they pictorial, architectural, or diagrammatic—and their spiritual signification as found in exegetical writings. The constant to-and-froing between the muteness of forms and their spiritual expressivity lies at the heart of Ohly's aesthetics, an aesthetics in which the spiritual meaning of a work of art—even its ordering of a spiritual world—is always its primary function, regardless of media or the individual specificity of its visual and material representation.

What, then, does Ohly mean when he notes the "muteness" of visible (and presumably material) forms? Given this perceived "muteness," how can he interpret how certain works of art signify? Take, for instance, the Annunciation miniature in the Sacramentary of St. Gereon from about 1000 (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 817, fol. 12), the point of departure for Ohly's consideration of color in medieval art (Fig. 2).⁴⁴ For Ohly, "color" is not a *res* "but a property the interpretation of which has to be sought in the allegoresis of colored objects like precious stones, flowers, or animals."⁴⁵ Ohly's account passes over the manner in which the amorphous green form that dominates the pictorial space of the St. Gereon Annunciation structures the illumination spatially by providing a sense of depth in which the sacred narrative unfolds: it overlaps the top left portion of Mary's throne, forcing Mary into the extreme foreground of the pictorial space, in fact, beyond the foreground



FIGURE 2. *Sacramentary of St. Gereon, Cologne, ca. 1000, Paris, BnF, MS lat. 817, fol. 12 (photo: BnF).*

since she breaks the ground plane of the picture by standing on the illumination's virtual frame, creating a type of expressive effect Meyer Schapiro found to be common in medieval art.⁴⁶ Nor does Ohly discuss how the green form might draw the gaze into the picture; nor does he consider how it might act as a pictorial device designed to block a beholder's vision of the Incarnation—a precocious forerunner to the perspectival devices that Daniel Arasse has explored in later paintings of the Annunciation—thereby underscoring the problem of representing the ineffable or the invisible.⁴⁷ Rather, Ohly reads the green presence within the illumination as signifying "acceptance of the Annunciation in faith,"⁴⁸ an interpretation he derives from several glosses that understand the green stone jasper as the "color of faith."⁴⁹ For Ohly, this undulating green form is "deobjectified": it makes no mimetic reference within the space of the image, nor does it describe the form of a cave, a cloud, or a grassy mound.⁵⁰ Freed from representation, in the ordinary sense, the passage of green pigment at the center of the painting "has acquired a life of its own that is only itself, in order, as such, to signify something," presumably, "something" *else*.⁵¹ Thus isolated from the formal syntax of



FIGURE 3. Hugh of Folieto, *De tribus columbis*, Paris, BnF, MS lat. 2495, fol. 2 (photo: BnF).

the Annunciation scene depicted in the manuscript, the color green is understood to qualify a passage of painting in terms of its chromatically instantiated spiritual signification.

Ohly further analogizes this aspect of the indeterminate green form, comparing its presentation of a signifying greenness to colored panes of glass, which “do not have to be part of an objective pictorial body” to bear meaning.⁵² While this reading is not without historical authority—consider Abbot Suger’s description in *De administratione* (ca. 1141) of the blue glass in the Tree of Jesse window at Saint-Denis as “sapphire glass”⁵³—we cannot help but remark how the vivid green form at the center of the painting structures the pictorial syntax of the page (just as color often structures pictorial design in medieval windows) but also forcefully foregrounds the physical properties of the painter’s pigments, prepared from minerals and other natural sources, within this representation of the Annunciation. In this image of the Incarnational meeting of divine form and exceptional human matter, the materials of painting are offered to the gaze in an insistently phenomenological *and* signifying fashion. Pace Ohly, as Powell demonstrates in her essay in this issue, color in works of art often does not only, or even primarily, index possible spiritual meanings; it can also index the thingness of painting.

Colors, in the irreducibly material forms of pigments and dyes, have histories, mythologies, and properties per se in the Middle Ages. Consider, for instance, Theophilus’ account of *de auro hispanico* (Spanish gold), a compound made from red copper, the powder of basilisk and human blood, and vinegar that takes on the character of gold in weight and color;⁵⁴ or the different types of green and *their* properties described in *De diversis artibus* (ca. 1125)—green earth, salt green, and Spanish green;⁵⁵ or that some medieval writers (e.g., Robert Grosseteste) understood the optical properties of green (and other colors) according to the Aristotelian scheme of the seven species of color;⁵⁶ or, finally, that green jasper, according to Albertus Magnus (ca. 1260), can “reduce . . . bleeding and menstruation . . . prevent conception and aids childbirth . . . keep the wearer from licentiousness.”⁵⁷ In these instances, material thing and chromatic property are inextricably one and the same, but that ontological identity does not always coincide with or lead to the spiritual sense inventoried and celebrated by Ohly and his exegetical sources.

This is not to say that Ohly’s discussion of color signification is without merit: quite the contrary. His analysis of the thirteenth-century dove miniature in Hugh of Folieto’s *De tribus columbis* (Paris, BnF, MS lat. 2495, fol. 2), originally

composed in the late 1130s, pivots on the relation between the painted bird and its properties, as elucidated by Hugh of Folieto in the text itself (Fig. 3).⁵⁸ Ohly provides a compelling analysis of both the painting and its larger spiritual signification, though, as Normore argues in her paper, this signification is complexly contingent, not least with respect to the beholder's reception of text and image.

The image is intricate: three concentric rings enclose the figure of the dove, each containing a commentary, Ohly argues, on the depicted dove, which, in turn, stands in for the scriptural dove evoked in the Psalms. Medallions occupy the four corners of the framed composition and provide textual interpretations of the four properties of the dove (the gold tail, the silver feathers, the wings of air, the body as sea); these medallions are encircled by narrower rings containing the text of Psalm 54:7–8: “Who will give me wings like a dove? And I will fly and I will rest. Behold I am wandering far off and I have remained in solitude.”⁵⁹ The page is divided along its central vertical axis by bands of text describing the eyes and feet of the dove; and the entire picture is framed by a molding inscribed with Psalm 67:14: “When you rest easy in the midst of your sheepfolds, [you are] the wings of the dove covered with silver, and pinions of its tail shimmering pale yellow with gold.”⁶⁰

In the first of two prologues to his work, Hugh of Folieto explains that he “did not just want to paint the dove to create a likeness, but also to describe it in words, to explain the picture with the text, so that even if someone did not like the simple picture, he could enjoy the interpretation of the text.”⁶¹ Framing his discussion of the image of the dove in terms of this authorial intention, Ohly similarly affirms that the picture's “function is to interpret the writing that forms the framework” and remarks that “[e]ven today, the picture on its own is still mute.”⁶² In this account, a medieval beholder would contemplate the pictorial composition *through* its texts and in that highly mediated fashion would come to consider the benefits of life inside the convent (*vita contemplativa*); otherwise the picture is mute.

Ohly's analysis, however, moves beyond the texts inscribed on the page, which he takes as his starting point to interpret the tropological signification of the biblical dove in medieval culture. To tease out just a few examples from this complex web of significs, each of the medallions offers a short inscription relating to one of the four properties of the dove. These are then interpreted in the body of the text inscribed on folios following the image. The medallions on the left side of the composition describe the wings of the dove as air color (or sapphire), by which divine contemplation is evoked, and silver, which, in turn, is related to “a discourse of holy exhortation on the tongues of those who teach.”⁶³ In each instance, Ohly draws out the larger implications of the colors of air and silver, finding inspiration in Hugh of Folieto's tract, the Bible, and other textual sources.

The dove's sapphire wings are oriented upward to the heavens, according to Ohly's reading, since sapphire generally refers to the color of the sky, or air. Just as the bird's wings are directed to the heavens, so, too, is the mind of the beholder

directed toward heaven.⁶⁴ Ohly develops a similar reading in relation to silver, here drawing from Hugh's text and modern proverbs grounded in medieval exegesis to interpret silver as referring to “the speech of Christ, the church, the preacher, and the individual soul.”⁶⁵

At this point in his exegesis of the dove painted on the page, Ohly returns to his maxim that colors are not things but the properties of things:

Since a color is not a thing per se that possesses any property other than itself, it assumes a significance only by means of some other thing that has the color—as one of its properties—and determines the direction of the color's signification on a given occasion. . . . The significations of colors emerge by way of things that have color as a property; the significations of colors that are specific to a particular thing, by way of the things they specifically belong to. If a thing's world of signification develops from the aggregate of its properties, that of the property “color” develops from the aggregate of things to which it may refer.⁶⁶

Here Ohly posits the signifying life of color in things, including flora and fauna as a profoundly relational hermeneutic economy. Just as the color white has no existence per se but instead is recognized as a property common to a number of *res*, so the medieval *significationes* of the property “white,” like the meaning of all white *res significantes* (or *Bedeutungsträger*), cannot be understood as a conventional imposition of signification. In Ohly's account, the medieval meanings of “white” exist in a dialectic relationship to the meanings discerned in the universe of “white things.” In this fashion, he describes a dynamic hermeneutic field in which *Bedeutungsträger* come into semantic intelligibility in relation to other meaningful *res*, a relation organized by perceptions of likeness and dissimilarity.⁶⁷

The remainder of Ohly's analysis is a magisterial account of how the formal arrangement of inscriptions in the picture—what is on the left and right, top and bottom of the page—relates to the figure of the dove and, ultimately, to the beholder's contemplation of the active versus the contemplative life, mediated by Hugh's interpretation of doves and other birds in the remainder of the manuscript. Ohly, however, stops short of reading the colors as relating to each other pictorially or in formally significant ways; rather, he tries (hypothetically, at his own admission) to find meaning in their juxtapositions throughout the page by reference to textual sources.⁶⁸ From an art historical perspective, Ohly's analysis is curiously abortive, refusing to engage with the images he interprets on their own terms. He would seem not to recognize how each representation of Hugh of Folieto's dove involves specific pictorial and chromatic configurations set in formal relations generative of aesthetic (i.e., sensual) responses in beholders, in addition to functioning as contemplative or didactic aids. For Ohly, the colors from which Hugh of Folieto's diagrammatic dove is fashioned are always,

in some manner, already determined by a text, and their relational *sensus* is best arrived at by way of an exegetical excursus into the domain of textual tradition.

If we pursue a reading of the page beyond the limits of Ohly's analysis, we might observe that the painted dove rests at the page's center on a brilliant red ground, its silver wings and gold and black tail standing in marked contrast to the red and green that vibrate chromatically throughout the diagram. The colors actively guide the beholder through the page by providing visual connections between the dove and its diagrammatic habitat. The gold of the tail, for example, also defines the inner circle of the four medallions occupying the corners of the page, and the silver at the tip of the dove's blue wings appears again in the wavelike border that frames the entire scene and relates it back to the dove. In fact, as Ohly argues, following Hugh, the border should be read as an outline of the dove itself, especially if one reads the golden dots at the top of the page as the diagrammatic bird's eyes:

The picture relates the upper and lower central bar to the eyes and the feet of the dove. From the bottom up (reading from the right) we read "rubor pedum cruor martyrum" [the red of the feet the blood of the martyrs], and above, "oculus croceus maturitas sensus" [the saffron-colored eye the ripeness of perception]. The eyes and the feet emphasize the top and the bottom of the picture of the dove, which *is* also a dove.⁶⁹

Where the text and painted image do not correspond, Ohly's analysis stalls. The text indicates that the dove's feet are red in conformity with the blood of the martyrs (*rubor pedum cruor martyrum*), and yet in this image the painted dove's feet are black.⁷⁰ Ohly cannot reconcile this discrepancy, suggesting that perhaps because the dove is situated on a red ground, the red feet were not necessary.⁷¹ Yet, surely the decision to paint the dove's feet or the contrasting ground behind them red (or not) was an artistic one: in a gesture of independence from textual prescription, the illuminator of the Paris manuscript chose *not* to paint the feet red, electing instead to employ that color in the circular field behind the avian form. A different artistic choice was made in a later manuscript of Hugh's text, the Lyell Aviary (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 71, fol. 4): here the feet of the diagrammatic dove *are* red, set against a bright blue ground (Fig. 4).⁷² In this instance, the illuminator followed the textual description of the dove, while the painter of the Paris manuscript chose to deviate from the text. In chromatic terms, as in every other formal respect, each painted dove is unique to its manuscript, produced, quite materially, by discrete, voluntary artistic acts that are simultaneously, at least in their potential effects, hermeneutic interventions in the visual tradition. Indeed, Ohly would seem to lay the groundwork for understanding each painted dove as a specific constellation of signifying properties, a unicum that nonetheless participates in a powerful tradition of medieval signification.

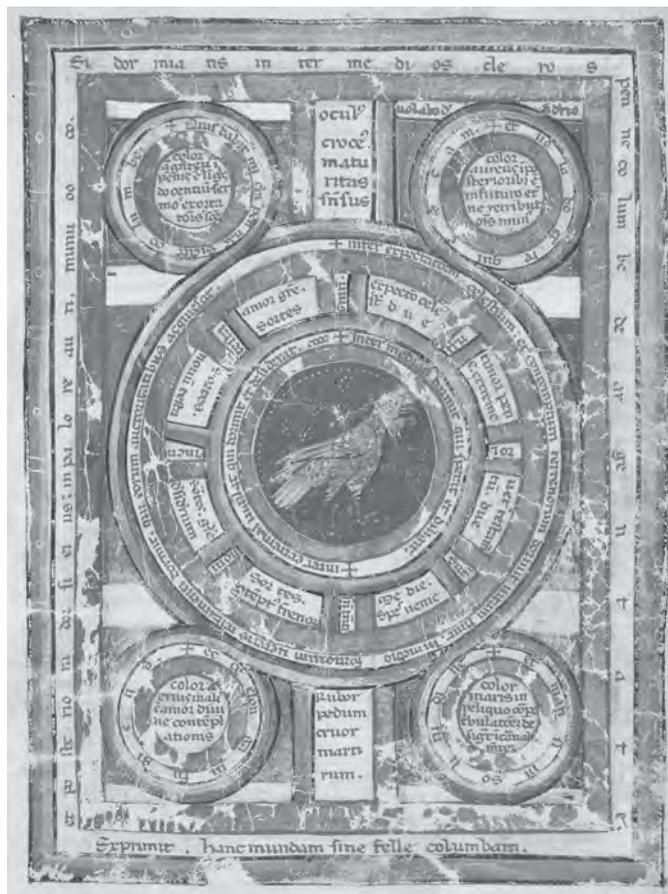


FIGURE 4. Lyell Aviary, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 71, fol. 4 (photo: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford).

Given Ohly's reading of the dove in the Paris manuscript, we are confronted with the question: Does this specific representation of a dove painted in this manuscript actually matter to his analysis at all? Or are the text and the living "natural" bird that is the text's exegetical object all that matter in the end, the painted image simply the residue of a didactic exegesis of one *creatura* named in scripture and living in the world?⁷³ If, on the one hand, the response to this question is negative, how, then, are we to reconcile Ohly's detailed analysis of the importance of the dove in medieval exegesis and the seemingly diagrammatic, even mnemonic, character of the illuminated page, a visible object intended to lead its beholder to a contemplative state *through* the dove painted squarely in the center of the page? If, on the other hand, this particular, painted dove does in fact matter, how are we to reconcile the differences between text and image we have observed? These are important questions that put pressure on Ohly's reliance on the written word to elucidate pictorial *res*, questions that reveal the methodological boundaries of Ohly's work.⁷⁴ In what might be his most ambitious work of art historical analysis, Ohly again relies on the word as the starting point for the structuring of meaning. However, in this case the *res* he chooses to analyze is the entirety of Siena



FIGURE 5. Domenico Beccafumi (1486–1551), Pact between Elijah and Ahab, pavement, Duomo, Siena, Italy (photo: ScalalArt Resource, NY).

Cathedral, not an exegetical manuscript, and the muted forms at stake in this investigation are not simply pictorial but also spatial, architectural, and sculptural.

In “Die Kathedrale als Zeitenraum: Zum Dom von Siena,” Ohly attempts nothing less than an analysis of every aspect of Sta. Maria Assunta’s decoration—from pavement to cupola, from numerology to cosmology—to demonstrate how medievally considered the sacred space of a church as temporally grounded in the history of salvation.⁷⁵ Forgoing any attempt to elucidate the properties of things, ordinarily understood, in this essay, Ohly is concerned above all else with how space structured meaning. Working from Hugh of St. Victor’s description of Noah’s Ark (*De archa Noe*, ca. 1125) and Adam Scotus’ twelfth-century commentary on the Tabernacle (*De tripartito tabernaculo*)—two works that Ohly believes took the form of physical paintings—among others, Ohly reads the built cathedral against textual interpretations of spiritual structures in order to perform an exegesis of the building as a whole.⁷⁶

Taking these texts as a starting point, Ohly moves seamlessly to an analysis of the duomo’s inlaid marble pavement. Reading the space of the cathedral as a representation of Christian time, he sidesteps an actual, physical, and phenom-

enological understanding of the cathedral as an architectonic space—one that a beholder would have to move *through*, not instantaneously, but over time, to contemplate the history represented within and by the building. This avoidance of the material, phenomenally temporal dimensions of an embodied experience of the cathedral as a built structure and space is explicitly justified by Ohly; he asserts that his text-driven approach is a “clearer” way to explain how the cathedral represents the temporality of salvation: “the pictorial representation of historical happenings speaks more clearly of the progression of time than does architectural form that does not interpret itself.”⁷⁷

This is a strange claim: How precisely do architectural, sculptural, and pictorial forms offer themselves for interpretation or perform interpretative work if not formally? Ohly does not offer any real explanation for his curious comment. And yet, a more rigorous formalist account of one scene in the pavement of the cathedral would seem to offer considerable support for the typological reading Ohly pursues. In the depiction of the Pact between Elijah and Ahab designed by Domenico Beccafumi (1486–1551) (Fig. 5), located in the center of the crossing defined by the hexagonal arrangement of inlaid marble pictures,

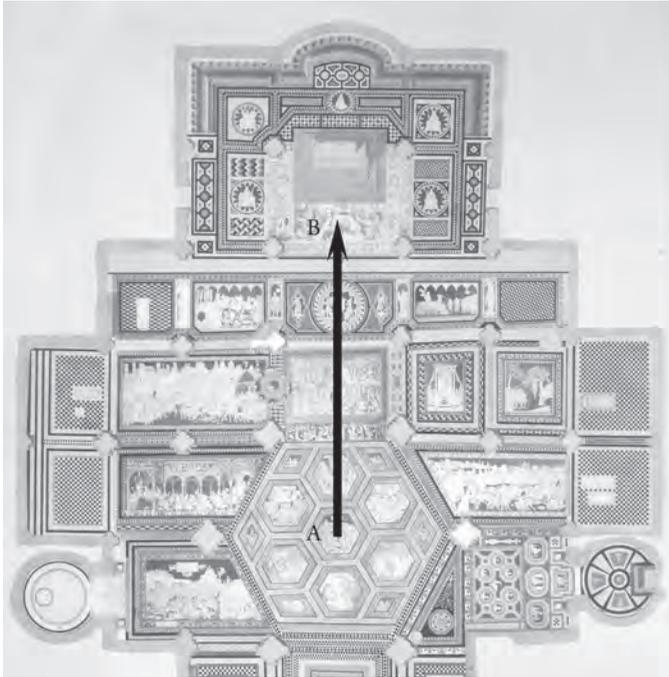


FIGURE 6. Giovanni Paciarelli, design of the pavement of the duomo in Siena, 1884, detail, A, location of Pact between Elijah and Ahab; B, location of Sacrifice of Isaac and the high altar, Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana del Duomo (photo: Scala/Art Resource NY).

the figure of Elijah pointing to the sacrificial steer is on direct axis with the high altar, set just three slabs to the east (Fig. 6). In situ, as Elijah points to the steer, his gesture formally relates that sacrificial beast to Christ's sacrifice on the altar. The fact that the dead tree in the far background of the paving slab featuring the prophet is also directly on axis with the high altar and given the shape of a cross makes this point in terms that are simultaneously visual, spatial, and typological. Although Ohly recognizes that Elijah gestures toward the high altar, he does not build an account of formal typology from it, something, we will recall, he lamented in 1982 was missing from art history.⁷⁸

Ohly reads the fifty-nine inlaid marble slabs that make up the duomo's pavement program as an "open book" that lays bare the history of salvation up through the period of Christ's infancy.⁷⁹ In his analysis, the pictures extending from the forecourt to the crossing, populated with pagans and Jews, delineate the prehistory of Christianity and are prophetic in nature. A history of the Old Testament from Elijah to Moses, with a few typological depictions from the New Testament, fills the area between the crossing and the high altar, driving the program's typology toward the apsidal area of the space, in which a representation of the Sacrifice of Isaac lies at the foot of the high altar.⁸⁰ As he parses this program, Ohly little engages the pavement as a series of visible forms, despite his earlier claim to the contrary that "pictorial" forms present temporal progression "more clearly" than architectural forms. Instead, he again

relies on texts—in this case, the inscribed banderoles featured in each paving slab—to elucidate the salvific and exegetical themes of the floor. For Ohly, the short texts incised into the cathedral's pavement do a job similar to the inscriptions that punctuate the painted pages in manuscripts of Hugh of Folieto's *De tribus columbis*:

This book [i.e., the pavement] asks to be read for its content, like a *chronica mundi* of the first five ages of man. From the portal to the altar, almost all the pictures—even in the sixteenth century—have a banderole let into the marble, without which the prophecy of the pavement would be almost mute. Pictures and words form a unit. A purely formal look at this work of art would lead past it into a vacuum.⁸¹

Ohly's reading of this Siense "open book" does not stop with the cathedral's floors. To understand the totalizing nature of the building as a site of *Zeitenraum*, Ohly continues his analysis with a reading of the vertical elevation stretching between the floor and the cupola as figuring the New Testament, in which the cathedral's columns, pillars, Nicola Pisano's pulpit, and the statues of twelve apostles and eight candelabra that adorn the pillars all play a role. Finally, Ohly reads the cycle of terra-cotta busts of popes from Peter to Lucius III (d. 1185) that adorn the cornice and form a band around the entire space as representing postbiblical time, extending into the medieval present. Ohly finds patristic authorization for his commanding exegesis of both the horizontal and vertical aspects of the cathedral as a total space of Christian salvation in a remarkable passage from Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) concerning the temple of Ezekiel. Describing how the gate of the temple of Solomon denotes holy scripture, Gregory explains that its width (*latitudo*) at ten cubits is less than its height (*longitudinem*) at thirteen cubits because the width represents the Old Testament, and its height the law under Christ:

What, therefore, was the width of the threshold of the gate if not the law of the Old Testament, and the height of the gate the grace of the New Testament? . . . The lesser orders were given to the Israelites through the Law, when Moses spoke to them in the field [Exodus 19:7]. The Lord gave higher orders to the Holy Apostles, when he taught them the commandments of life from the mountain [Matthew 5:17] . . . Hence the law is understood which lay along the width [i.e., the horizontal dimension of the gate], and which rose up along the height [i.e., the vertical dimensions of the gate].⁸²

As Ohly continually returns to textual sources to explain the experience of architectonic and pictorial works, we cannot fail to recognize that his powerful elucidation of medieval signification has its own curious blind spots when it comes to the interpretation of visible and material forms.⁸³

Conclusion

If Ohly's magisterial account of medieval signification often seems to falter when confronted with the specificity of individual works of art, their insistent and irreducibly individual material presence and predication, his work nonetheless powerfully reveals how much we have yet to learn from medieval sources—both verbal and nonverbal—about the production and experience of meaning in the Middle Ages. The essays that follow critically engage with Ohly's insights, while proposing readings of medieval objects, materials, and material processes that insist on the contingency of meaning production and the

signifying power of artful forms. This special issue of *Gesta* offers a series of selective views of what art historians might gain from Ohly's penetrating vision of the expansive, materialist practice of medieval signification. If Ohly's moments of hesitation or "muteness" in the presence of difficult and seductive medieval works of art may give us pause, it is our hope that in those silences art historians will find the space to articulate our own "object lessons" in dialogue with Ohly's generous pursuit of a cultural philology adequate to its polysemous, polymorphous *res significantes*.

NOTES

- * This special issue originated in a session sponsored by the ICMA at the 2012 College Art Association Annual Conference; we are happy to acknowledge the ICMA's support and owe particular thanks to President Lawrence Nees and Elizabeth Sears, chair of the Publications Committee, as well as to the editor of *Gesta*, Lisa Reilly, and the anonymous readers for their suggestions and critiques. Questions and comments offered by attendees of the CAA session contributed in many ways to the session's revised incarnation in this issue, and we remain grateful for those collegial and instructive responses. Each of the participants in the CAA session—Beate Fricke, Christina Normore, Amy Powell, and Ittai Weinryb (whose paper, regretfully, we were not able to include)—challenged our thinking and taught us a great deal about *Dingbedeutung* in the Middle Ages; we are indebted to each of them. Special thanks are also due to Herbert Kessler, whose essay in this issue was not presented in the CAA session but was conceived in relation to that session and who encouraged our interest in Friedrich Ohly from the beginning. We would also like to acknowledge Daniel Meyer, Director, Special Collections Research Center and University Archivist, University of Chicago, who kindly secured the photograph of Friedrich Ohly that appears in this essay. Research and travel funds for the CAA session and this article were graciously provided by the American Council of Learned Societies, the Department of Art History and the Division of the Humanities, University of Chicago, and the History of Art Department, Johns Hopkins University, without whose support we could not have realized this project.
1. For a sampling of recent work taking up the question of materials and materiality in the medieval period, see B. Buettner, "From Bones to Stones—Reflections on Jeweled Reliquaries," in *Reliquiare im Mittelalter*, Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte: Studien, Theorien, Quellen, ed. B. Reudenbach and G. Toussaint (Berlin, 2005), 43–59; C. W. Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2011); J. J. Cohen, "Stories of Stone," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 1/1–2 (2010), 56–63; F. B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton, 2009); N. Gramaccini, "Zur Ikonologie der Bronze im Mittelalter," *Städte Jahrbuch*, 11 (1987), 147–70; H. L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, Rethinking the Middle Ages, 1 (Peterborough, ON, 2004), 19–43; T. Raff, "'Materia superat opus': Materialien als Bedeutungsträger bei mittelalterlichen Kunstwerken," in *Studien zur Geschichte der europäischen Skulptur im 12./13. Jahrhundert*, ed. H. Beck, K. Hengevoss-Dürkop, and G. W. Kamp (Frankfurt, 1994), 17–28; idem, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe* (Munich, 1994); and K. Robertson, "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto," *Exemplaria*, 22/2 (2010), 99–118.
2. In addition to the ICMA's sponsored session at CAA from which this special issue emerged, the 2012 conference also featured the double session chaired by Kathryn Gerry and Francesco Lucchini, "The Materiality of Art: Evidence, Interpretation, Theory"; and, at Kalamazoo, the ICMA sponsored a double session presented by the Material Collective and chaired by Ben C. Tilghman and Karen Overbey, "Active Objects: I, Optics and Transparency; II, Agency and Phenomenology."
3. The literature is too vast and varied to be surveyed here; an excellent point of entry into the historical and historiographical issues is offered by C. Hahn, "Vision," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. C. Rudolph (Oxford, 2006), 44–64.
4. For a recent critical review of the literature, with an extensive bibliography, see D. Kinney, "The Concept of Spolia," in Rudolph, *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 233–52.
5. Several scholars working within or in dialogue with the disciplines of the history of science and technology have attended more closely to nontextual forms of evidence than the literary-historical accounts inventoried below. The following studies offer exemplary points of entry into a wider literature: L. Daston, ed., *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); L. Daston and K. Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York, 1998); U. Klein and W. Lefèvre, *Materials in Eighteenth-Century Science: A Historical Ontology*, Transformations (Cambridge, MA, 2007); U. Klein and E. C. Spary, eds., *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory* (Chicago, 2009); P. H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 2004); and eadem and B. Schmidt, *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects, and Texts, 1400–1800* (Chicago, 2007).
6. C. Gallagher and S. Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, 2000); S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980); and H. A. Veveser, ed., *The New Historicism* (New York, 1989).

7. B. Brown, "How to Do Things with Things (A Toy Story)," *Critical Inquiry*, 24/4 (1998), 935–64; idem, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago, 2003); idem, ed., *Things* (Chicago, 2004). Following Heidegger, Brown has proposed an analytic distinction between "the thing" and "the object." In this essay we will employ the English word "thing" in an expansive, pre-Heideggerian sense, in keeping with the polysemy of the word *res* in the Middle Ages; in our usage, *res* thus encompasses objects, materials, and material components of the natural world and of historical culture. For the Heideggerian locus classicus, see M. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought: Martin Heidegger Works*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York, 1971), 165–86; originally published as "Das Ding," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen, 1954). Heidegger first made a distinction between "things" and "objects" in his discussion of tools in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), vol. 2 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt, 1977), chaps. 15–16, 90–102; trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson as *Being and Time* (Oxford, 1962). Heidegger articulated this further to encompass "the art object" in a lecture at the Kunstwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft in Freiburg on 13 November 1935 and subsequently published as *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart, 1960); translated as "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 17–87. This fundamental essay has become a touchstone for art historical methodology, criticism, and, especially, modernist and postmodernist aesthetics and art practice. See D. Preziosi, ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2009), 284–95, which also includes critical responses to Heidegger's essay by M. Schapiro ("The Still Life as Personal Object: A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh (1968)," 296–300) and J. Derrida ("Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing [*Pointure*] (1978)," 301–15). See most recently, I. D. Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge, 2011).
8. See, for example, M. De Grazia, M. Quilligan, and P. Stallybrass, eds., *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture, 8 (Cambridge, 1996); P. Fumerton and S. Hunt, eds., *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, New Cultural Studies (Philadelphia, 1999); A. R. Jones and P. Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture, 38 (Cambridge, 2000); and P. Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, Zones of Religion, ed. P. Spyer (New York, 1998), 183–207. On the "new new historicism," see P. Fumerton, "Introduction: A New New Historicism," in Fumerton and Hunt, 1–17. For several critical responses to new historicism and "new new historicism," see D. Bruster, *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn*, Early Modern Cultural Series (New York, 2003); J. G. Harris, "The New New Historicism's Wunderkammer of Objects," *European Journal of English Studies*, 4/2 (2000), 111–23; idem, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia, 2009); K. Robertson, "Medieval Things: Materiality, Historicism, and the Premodern Object," *Literature Compass*, 5/6 (2008), 1060–80; and J. Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis, 2003).
9. This account of Ohly's curriculum vitae relies on several published notices of his life and work: F. Ohly, "Glück eines Gefangenen mit Puschkin und mit Steinen," in *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften zur Literaturgeschichte und zur Bedeutungsforschung*, ed. U. Ruberg and D. Peil (Stuttgart, 1995), 931–37; S. P. Jaffe, foreword to F. Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis: Studies in Medieval Significance and the Philology of Culture*, trans. K. J. Northcott and ed. Jaffe (Chicago, 2005), ix–xii; S. P. Jaffe, epilogue to Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 370–93; C. Meier, "Ohly, Ernst Friedrich," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 19 (1998), <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118589660.html>; P. Meyvaert, S. Wenzel, and C. S. Jaeger, "Friedrich Ohly," *Speculum*, 72/3 (1997), 941–43; C. Meier-Staubach, "De thesauro suo nova et vetera—Friedrich Ohly 1914–1996," *FS*, 30 (1996), 419–24; and eadem, "Zwischen historischer Semiotik und philologischer Komparatistik: Friedrich Ohly's Werk und Wirkung," in *Das Mittelalter und die Germanisten: Zur neueren Methodengeschichte der Germanischen Philologie; Freiburger Colloquium 1997*, Scriptorium Freiburgense, 11, ed. E. C. Lutz (Freiburg, 1998), 63–91.
10. Meyvaert, Wenzel, and Jaeger, "Friedrich Ohly," 942.
11. This text is widely available in a reprint edition: F. Ohly, *Sage und Legende in der Kaiserchronik: Untersuchungen über Quellen und Aufbau der Dichtung* (Darmstadt, 1968).
12. Meier, "Ohly, Ernst Friedrich": "Seine Dissertation *Sage und Legende in der Kaiserchronik* (1940) und seine 1944 zwischen Fronteinsätzen eingereichte Habilitationsschrift *Hohelied-Studien, Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis um 1200* (1958) zeigen eine deutliche Distanz zu ideologischen Tendenzen ihrer Entstehungszeit und bedeuten zugleich den Einstieg in das neue Forschungsgebiet der Allegorie und Typologie mit seinem weiten lat. Überlieferungshorizont." Translation by A. Kumler and C. R. Lakey.
13. F. Ohly, *Hohelied-Studien: Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis um 1200*, Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main Geisteswissenschaftliche Reihe, 1 (Wiesbaden, 1958). See also the posthumously published translation, edition, and commentary on the St. Trudperter Hohelied, a work that Ohly identified in his *Habilitation* as the *raison d'être* for that work's diachronic groundwork: F. Ohly, ed., *Das St. Trudperter Hohelied: Eine Lehre der liebenden Gotteserkenntnis*, Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 2 (Frankfurt, 1998), 2.
14. On Franz Koch, see, among others, H. G. Atkins, *German Literature through Nazi Eyes* (London, 1941); W. Höppner, "Franz Koch und die deutsche Literaturwissenschaft in der Nachkriegszeit: Zum Problem von Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik," in *Atta Troll tanzt noch: Selbstbesichtigungen der literaturwissenschaftlichen Germanistik im 20. Jahrhundert*, Literatur Forschung, ed. P. Boden, H. Dainat, and U. Menzel (Berlin, 1997), 175–92; and idem, "Wissenschaft und Macht: Julius Petersen (1878–1941) und Franz Koch (1888–1969) am Germanischen Seminar in Berlin," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 20/2 (2010), 324–38.
15. Meyvaert, Wenzel, and Jaeger, "Friedrich Ohly," 942. For Ohly's recollection of these events, see Ohly, "Glück eines Gefangenen."
16. Meyvaert, Wenzel, and Jaeger, "Friedrich Ohly," 943.
17. F. Ohly, "Vom geistigen Sinn des Wortes im Mittelalter," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 89 (1958), 1–23. Reprinted in F. Ohly, *Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung* (Darmstadt, 1977), 1–31. Two English translations were published in 2005: "Friedrich Ohly: 'The Spiritual Sense of Words in the Middle Ages,'" trans. D. A. Wells, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 41/1 (2005), 18–42; and F. Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word in the Middle Ages," in Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 1–30.
18. G. Althoff, "Karl Hauck und die interdisziplinäre Mittelalterforschung in Münster," *FS*, 41(2007), 1–9.
19. Among other important essays published in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* are H. Beltzig, "Probleme der Kunstgeschichte Italiens im Frühmittelalter," 1 (1967), 94–143; R. Deshman, "Benedictus Monarcha et Monachus: Early Medieval Ruler Theology and the Anglo-Saxon Reform," 22 (1988), 204–240; C. Meier, "Die Bedeutung der Farben im Werk Hildegards von Bingen," 6 (1972), 245–355; T. Puttfarcken, "Ein neuer Vorschlag zum St. Galler Klosterplan: Die originalen Maßinschriften," 2 (1968), 78–95; O. K. Werckmeister, "Die Auferstehung der Toten am Westportal von St. Lazare in Autun," 16 (1982), 208–236; and many of Ohly's own essays.
20. Ohly, *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften*, x: "Der Geschichte bleibendes Gespräch über dauernd Menschliches zeigt ihm in den Künsten Möglichkeiten des Menschseins, Wirklichkeit geworden in sinnerfüllten Formen." English translation modified from Ohly, preface to *Sensus spiritualis*, xvii.

21. C. Meier and R. Suntrup, *Handbuch der Farbenbedeutung im Mittelalter*, Pictura et Poesis, 30, 2 vols. (Cologne, [forthcoming]); and H. Meyer and R. Suntrup, *Lexikon der mittelalterlichen Zahlenbedeutungen*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 56 (Munich, 1987). In addition to these reference works, see also the following monographic studies: C. Meier, *Gemma spiritalis: Methode und Gebrauch der Edelsteinallegorese vom frühen Christentum bis ins 18. Jahrhundert*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 34 (Munich, 1977) (a second volume has been announced but has not yet appeared); H. Meyer, *Die Zahlenallegorese im Mittelalter: Methode und Gebrauch*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 25 (Munich, 1975); and R. Suntrup, *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in lateinischen und deutschen Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 37 (Munich, 1978).
22. Jaffe, epilogue to Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 375: "Ohly's work is not only about philology; it is also about the renewal of philology, and a significant aspect of this renewal was constituted by the examples he gave of a new emphasis on the visual: the fruits of his 'true inclination, to pursue philology as an aesthetic science' (*Kunstwissenschaft*)."
23. See, for example, Ohly's examination of the language and semantics of "sweetness" (*dulcis, süß*) in the Middle Ages: F. Ohly, *Süsse Nägel der Passion: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Semantik*, Saecula Spiritalia, 21 (Baden-Baden, 1989). For a recent revisiting of this topos, see M. Caruthers, "Sweetness," *Speculum*, 81/4 (2006), 999–1013. A more comprehensive analysis of Ohly's intellectual project and working method is offered by Meier, "Zwischen historischer Semiotik und philologischer Komparatistik."
24. E. R. Curtius, "The Book as Symbol," in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1953), 302–47. Originally published as "Das Buch als Symbol," in *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1948), 304–51.
25. Richard of St. Victor, *Excerptio numerorum allegoricarum Libri XXIV 2.3: De scripturae divinae triplici modo tractandi*, in Migne, *PL* 177, 205B. Cited in Ohly, "The Spiritual Sense of Words," trans. Wells, 20.
26. Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word," trans. Northcott, 4–5.
27. *Ibid.*, 13.
28. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana, De vera religione* 2.13.20, *CCSL*, 32, ed. K. D. Daur and J. Martin (Turnhout, 1962), 49–50: "et eo sunt infirmiores, quo doctiores uideri uolunt non rerum scientia, qua aedificamur, sed signorum qua non inflari omnino difficile est." English translation from Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford, 1999), 41.
29. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 2.16.24–25, *CCSL*, 32, 49–50: "Rerum autem ignorantia facit obscuras figuratas locutiones, cum ignoramus uel animantium uel lapidum uel herbarum naturas aliarumue rerum, quae plerumque in scripturis similitudinis alicuius gratia ponuntur. Nam et de serpente, quod notum est totum corpus eum pro capite obicere ferentibus, quantum inlustrat sensum illum, quod dominus iubet astutos nos esse *sicut serpentes* [cf Matt. 10,16], ut scilicet pro capite nostro, quod est Christus, corpus potius persequentibus offeramus, ne fides christiana tamquam necetur in nobis, si parcentes corpori negemus deum! . . . Vt ergo notitia naturae serpentis inlustrat multas similitudines, quas de hoc animante scriptura dare consuevit, sic ignorantia nonnullorum animalium, quae non minus per similitudines commemorat, impedit plurimum intellectorem. Sic lapidum, sic herbarum, uel quaeque tenentur radicibus. . . . Nec aliam ob causam facile est intellegere pacem perpetuam significare oleae ramulo, quem rediens ad arcam columba pertulit, nisi quia nouimus et olei lenem contactum non facile alieno humore corrumpi et arborem ipsam frondere perenniter." English translation from Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 44.
30. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, act 2, scene 1, lines 16–17, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974), 376.
31. *Distinctiones monasticae*, Liber 3, *De lapide*, in J. B. Pitra, *Spicilegium solesmense complectens sanctorum patrum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum anecdota hactenus opera, selecta e graecis orientalibusque et latinis codicibus*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1852), 2:330: "Christus, et angelica uirtus, Christi quoque sponsa, // Justus, iustitia, carnalis sensus, et usus // Pravus, peccatum grave, daemon, falsus hebraeus, // Verus gentilis dicitur esse lapis"; English translation in Ohly, "The Spiritual Sense of Words," trans. Wells, 24. According to R. E. Kaske, the *Distinctiones monasticae* were compiled in the early thirteenth century in England and are preserved in two manuscripts: Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 3475, fols. 1–127; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. C.22, 174–230. See R. W. Hunt, "Notes on the *Distinctiones monasticae et morales*," in *Liber Floridus: Mittellateinische Studien*, ed. B. Bischoff and S. Brechter (St. Ottilien, 1950), 355–62; idem, "A Manuscript Containing Extracts from the *Distinctiones monasticae*," *Medium Aevum*, 44 (1975), 238–41; Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation*, Toronto Medieval Bibliographies, 11 (Toronto, 1988), 36; and A. Wilmar, "Un répertoire d'exégèse composé en Angleterre vers le début du XIIIe siècle," in *Mémorial Lagrange*, Cinquantenaire de l'École biblique et archéologique française de Jerusalem (Paris, 1940), 307–46.
32. Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word," trans. Northcott, 9.
33. Peter of Poitiers, *Petri Pictaviensis Allegoriae super tabernaculum Moysi*, Publications in Mediaeval Studies, 3, ed. P. S. Moore and J. A. Corbett (Notre Dame, IN, 1961), 4: "Quelibet enim res, quot habet proprietates, tot habet linguas aliquid spirituale nobis et invisibile insinuantes, pro quarum diversitate et ipsius nominis acceptio variatur." English translation modified from Ohly, "The Spiritual Sense of Words," trans. Northcott, 21.
34. Ohly's repeated ascription of "muteness" to material things and works of art will be discussed more fully below.
35. Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word," trans. Northcott, 9.
36. Anonymous of Clairvaux, in Pitra, *Spicilegium solesmense*, 2:90: "Ros invisibiliter descendit; refrigerat; fecundat; clarus, suavis; modico calore siccatur; terram mollescit; semini placet; nocte fluit et silentio, minutim ac sparsim." Cited in Ohly, "On the Spiritual Sense of the Word," trans. Northcott, 12–13.
37. Robert Grosseteste, *De operationibus solis*, ed. in J. J. McEvoy, "The Sun as *res* and *signum*: Grosseteste's Commentary on *Ecclesiasticus* ch. 43, vv. 1–5," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 41 (1974), 90–91: "cum species et formae et figurae rerum quasi quaedam litterae sint et quaedam verba loquentia sensibiles causas usque ad rationes in mente divina, in sermonibus solis est iter festinatum, quia in formis et figuris et speciebus a sole impressis, sive per eius efficaciam eductis, quasi in eius verbo paratur iter humanae intelligentiae et investigationi ad causas visibiles, ascendendo seriatim usque ad invisibilia Dei, quae conspiciuntur intellecta per ea quae facta sunt visibilia; et quia ascensus iste a visibilibus ad invisibilia Dei, licet sit extremorum distantia maxima, pertransiri potest a vigore." Translation by A. Kumler; emphasis added to indicate scriptural citations. McEvoy, 41–45, dates the text to ca. 1230–35.
38. See, for example, his work on Goethe in *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften: "Römisches und Biblisches in Goethes 'Märchen' (1961)," 217–36; "Goethes Ehrfurchten—ein ordo caritatis (1961)," 237–310; "Zum Kästchen in Goethes 'Wanderjahren' (1962)," 437–443; and on Goethe and Thomas Mann, in *Der Verfluchte und der Erwählte: Von Leben mit der Schuld (Opalden, 1976)*; trans. by L. Archibald as *The Damned and the Elect: Guilt in Western Culture* (Cambridge, 1992).*
39. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 4338, fols. 109–112: "par les robes dont sont uestuz les cors qui sont estrumenz pour toutes euuvres faire nous entendons les saintes occupations et les bonnes euures que creature responsable cest homme doit faire pour pleire a son createur. Et pour pourchacier le pardurable louier. Et par le boutonement de la robe

- qui apert par dehors et est sus la robe esleue nous entendons la vanite et la plesance dou monde dont le deable boutonne les euures de ceus et de celles qui plu entendent par leur euures plaire au monde ou a quelque creature que il ne font a leur creatueur . . . par les chaues dont sunt les iambes et les piez uestuz et chauciez qui sunt la derreniere partie de lomme et par quoi il est joint a la terre nous entendons la remembrance de la mort. Et en signe de ce les chaues dont les hommes souloient communement user estoient noires. Or sunt orendroit coulourees de diuerses couleurs. Par quoi nous entendons dou monde les delices les richeces et les honneurs qui ostent a homme la remembrance de la mort et lausement. Et ladrecement de son sauement.” Translation by A. Kumler. For further discussion of this manuscript, see idem, “Translating ma dame de Saint-Pol: The Privilege and Predicament of the Devotee in the Legiloque Manuscript,” in *Translating the Middle Ages*, ed. K. L. Fresco and C. D. Wright (Burlington, VT, [forthcoming]); and M. Rouse and R. Rouse, “French Literature and the Counts of Saint-Pol ca. 1178–1377,” *Viator*, 41/1 (2010), 135–39. The *Nouueletez du monde* treatise is also preserved in two contemporary illuminated manuscripts containing the same program of text and images: Paris, BnF, MS fr. 1136; and Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 137. The tract has not yet received the attention it deserves; Ernest Langlois transcribed the first and last lines of the *Nouueletez* and briefly discussed the tract’s contents (he was not aware of its inclusion in BnF, MS n.a.f. 4338): Langlois, *Nouvelles françaises inédites du quinzième siècle*, Bibliothèque du XVe siècle (Paris, 1908), 118–21. In addition to the two material novelties discussed here, the text offers *chançons hoquetees* (hocketed songs), a sonic immaterial novelty, as objects for moral-theological consideration.
40. Ohly, “Typology as a Form of Historical Thought,” in Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 68. Originally published as “Typologie als Denkform der Geschichtsbetrachtung,” in *Natur, Religion, Sprache, Universität: Universitätsvorträge 1982/83*, Schriftenreihe der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 7 (Münster, 1983). Reprinted in Ohly, *Ausgewählte und neue Schriften*, 445–72.
 41. For further discussion, see the essays by Christina Normore and Beate Fricke in this issue.
 42. Ohly, “Typologie als Denkform,” 447: “So gut wie alle Künste, im Mittelalter von der Buchmalerei, der Goldschmiedekunst, der Skulptur und der Architektur bis hin zur Glasfenstermalerei, und einige bis ins 19. Jahrhundert, zählen Typologisches zu ihren Gegenständen und haben eigene Formen seiner Darstellung ausgebildet. Die Kunstgeschichte hat über das Ikonographische hinaus die Möglichkeit zusammenschauender Gestaltung sich zu eigen machen.” English from Ohly, “Typology as a Form of Historical Thought,” in Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 34–35. Emphasis added by authors.
 43. Ohly, “Problems of Medieval Significs and Hugh of Folieto’s ‘Dove Miniature,’” in Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 68.
 44. On the Sacramentary of St. Gereon, see P. Bloch and H. Schnitzler, *Die ottonische Kölner Malerschule*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf, 1967), 1:37–44; and P. Lauer, ed., *Bibliothèque nationale, catalogue général des manuscrits latins*, 9 vols. (Paris, 1940), 2:489.
 45. Ohly, “Problems of Medieval Significs,” 73.
 46. It should be noted that Gabriel’s wings also break the pictorial ground plane and overlap the frame. See M. Schapiro, “On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs,” in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York, 1994), 1–32, at 7–12. Originally published in *Semiotica*, 1/3 (1969), 223–42.
 47. D. Arasse, *L’Annonciation italienne: Une histoire de perspective* (Paris, 1999). See also H. L. Kessler, “Speculum,” *Speculum*, 86/1 (2011), 1–41, at 21; and R. Zorach, *The Passionate Triangle* (Chicago, 2011), 134–41.
 48. Ohly, “Problems of Medieval Significs,” 74.
 49. Ohly, *ibid.*, 73, does not provide a source for this exegesis, saying only that there are “dozens of instances.” For several examples of medieval interpretations of green stones, including jasper, see Meier, *Gemma spiritalis*, 152–56.
 50. Ohly, “Problems of Medieval Significs,” 74. Ohly’s reading of the green form seems to depend on or derive, in some fashion, from that of Hubert Schrade, a relation acknowledged at 74n8, yet Ohly’s interest in the semantic charge of this space of “deobjectified” green would seem to diverge from the “color phantasmagoria” that Schrade ultimately discerned in it: Schrade, *Vor- und frühromanische Malerei: Die karolingische, ottonische und frühsalische Zeit*, Malerei des Mittelalters, 1 (Cologne, 1958), 225–26.
 51. Ohly, “Problems of Medieval Significs,” 74.
 52. *Ibid.*, 76.
 53. Abbot Suger, *De administratione*, 34, in E. Panofsky, ed., *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures* (Princeton, 1979), 76–77: “Unde, quia magni constant mirifico opere sumptuque profuso vitri vestiti et saphirorum materia[e].” Cf. Revelation 21:19. For further analysis of this point, see Herbert Kessler’s contribution to this issue; and idem, “The Function of *Vitrum Vestitum* and the Use of *Materia Saphirorum* in Suger’s St.-Denis,” reprinted in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, 2000), 190–205. Originally published in *L’image: Fonctions et usages des images dans l’occident medieval*, ed. J. Baschet and J. C. Schmitt (Paris, 1996), 179–203.
 54. Theophilus, *De diversis artibus* 2.48, in *The Various Arts: De diversis artibus*, trans. C. R. Dodwell, Oxford Medieval Texts (London, 1961), 96–98: “sicque tamdiu faciunt, donec ipsa confectio cuprum transmordeat, et inde pondus et colorem auri suscipiat.”
 55. For green Earth, see Theophilus, *De diversis artibus* 1.2, 5; for salt green, *ibid.*, 1.35, 32; for Spanish green, *ibid.*, 1.36, 33.
 56. At present, the only printed edition of Grosseteste’s *De colore* (ca. 1225) can be found in L. Baur, *Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, 9 (Münster, 1912), 78–79. On *De colore*, see most recently H. E. Smithson et al., “A Three-Dimensional Color Space from the 13th Century,” *Journal of the Optical Society of America A*, 29/2 (2012), A346–A352.
 57. Albertus Magnus, *Liber II, Mineralium* 2.8, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, 38 vols. (Paris, 1890), 5:38: “Jaspis est lapis multorum colorum, et habet species decem: melior tamen est viridis translucens, rubeas habens venas, et in argento proprio locari habet, et in partibus multis invenitur. Expertum enim est quod stringit fluxum sanguinis et menstruorum. Aiunt etiam quod negat conceptum, et iuvat partum: et quod gestantem se a luxuria prohibet.” English translation from Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. D. Wyckoff (Oxford, 1967), 101.
 58. Ohly relies on the *PL* edition of Hugh’s text, compared at points with that found in the Paris manuscript: Hugo de Folieto, *De bestiis et aliis rebus*, Migne, *PL* 177, 9–165. It should be noted, however, that Ohly reproduces and discusses images found in other manuscript witnesses. On the manuscript tradition, see the translation, edition, and commentary by W. B. Clark, *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouilloys’ Aviarum*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 80 (Binghamton, NY, 1992).
 59. Psalm 54:7–8: “et dixi quis dabit mihi pinnas sicut columbae et volabo et requiescam ecce elongavi fugiens et mansi in solitudine diapsalma.”
 60. Psalm 67:14: “si dormiatis inter medios clerios pinnae columbae deargentatae et posteriora dorsi eius in pallore auri.”
 61. Hugo de Folieto, *De clastro animae*, Migne, *PL* 177, 13: “Nec tantum volui columbam formando pingere, sed etiam dictando describere, et per scripturam demonstrare picturam, ut cui non placuerit simplicitas picturae, placeat saltem moralitas scripturae.” English translation from Ohly, “Problems of Medieval Significs,” 86.

62. Ohly, "Problems of Medieval Significs," 95.
63. *Ibid.*, 102. The lower left reads, "color aeriis in alis est amor divine contemplacinois"; the upper left reads, "color argenteus in pennis est in linguis docentium sermo sancte exhortacionis."
64. For a different reading of gems and stones and the production of meaning through their material form, see Beate Fricke's contribution to this issue.
65. Ohly, "Problems of Medieval Significs," 102.
66. *Ibid.*, 103–4.
67. On the phenomenon and function of *Bedeutungsträger* or *Sinnträger* in medieval significs, specifically in relation to color signification in the Middle Ages, see also Meier, *Gemma spiritalis*, 45–55; and eadem, "Das Problem der Qualitätenallegorese," *FS*, 8 (1974), 245–355.
68. Ohly, "Problems of Medieval Significs," 121: "The considerations which follow are necessarily hypothetical, as they try to make sense of what is in the realms of possibility. They are based upon experience with other twelfth-century texts that interpret pictures and do not claim to be complete evidence."
69. *Ibid.*, 95–96.
70. *Ibid.*, 96.
71. *Ibid.*, 120: "The feet in the picture are not painted red, as the text and inscriptions say they are, perhaps because they are on a red field."
72. [N. B. Omit URL following if we get to include COLOR repro] For an open-access full-color image of this page of the manuscript, see <http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/s/e99wcv>. A member of the Heiligenkreuz Aviary Group, so-called after the exemplar from Heiligenkreuz Abbey (MS 226) dated to the late twelfth century, the Lyell Aviary was produced in Italy in ca. 1300. See M. Carruthers, "Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture: The Role of 'Place' in the Arts of Memory," in *Translatio, or, The Transmission of Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Modes and Messages*, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 13, ed. L. H. Hollengreen (Turnhout, 2008), 18; Clark, *The Medieval Book of Birds*, 40–51; and C. De Clercq, "Le rôle de l'image dans un manuscrit médiéval (Bodleian, Lyell 71)," *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 37 (1962), 23–30.
73. Although Ohly seems to employ the qualifier "natural" to distinguish the dove as an actual animal from the "painted" representations of doves in the manuscripts he discusses, this distinction is frequently blurred. At one point in his essay ("Problems of Medieval Significs," 94) he explicitly fuses these two categories of dove, in a rather lapidary fashion: "The person looking at the painted dove is surprised that its nature is barely portrayed by the picture. It merely typifies and does not emphasize its properties in the way that we might expect in a text that is to serve as a stimulus to interpretation. The natural picture of the dove is the center of a spiritual view of being and determination of location in an order which is determined by circles and squares, the circular movement of which within the framework determines the picture."
74. It should be noted that this is precisely the same criticism usually marshaled against Panofsky's theory of iconology. Ohly's relationship to Panofsky is intriguing: on the one hand, he rarely refers to Panofsky by name or text, yet he mentions "iconology" quite frequently in his texts and in many ways interprets works of art as if channeling Panofsky's theory *tout court*. On the origins of Panofsky's theory of iconology, see J. Elsner and K. Lorenz, "The Genesis of Iconology," *Critical Inquiry*, 38/3 (2012), 483–512; and M. A. Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1984). For further comparison of Ohly's and Panofsky's approach to the question of the apperception of meaning in relation to works of art, see Christina Normore's contribution to this issue.
75. Ohly, "Die Kathedrale als Zeitenraum: Zum Dom von Siena," *FS*, 6 (1972), 94–158. For the English translation, see Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Spcae: On the Duomo of Siena," in Ohly, *Sensus Spiritualis*, 136–233.
76. Hugh of St. Victor, *De archa Noe: Libellus de formatione arche*, CCCM, 176, 176A, ed. P. Sicard, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 2001); C. Rudolph, "First, I find the center point": Reading the Text of Hugh of Saint Victor's *The Mystic Ark*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 94/4 (Philadelphia, 2004); and Adam Scotus, *De tripartito tabernaculo*, Migne, PL 198, 609–790.
77. Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 157. For a different understanding of the temporality of architecture, see M. Trachtenberg, *Building-in-Time: From Giotto to Alberti and Modern Oblivion* (New Haven, 2010), at 249–61 for Siena Cathedral.
78. Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 178: "Elijah's gesture, in the middle of the picture indicating the high altar, points, in the picture, to the site of the sacrifice that—in the main picture of the Elijah cycle which is in front of it—shows God heeding the prayer and sacrifice of the prophet while the prophets of Baal are being murdered." See n. 42 above.
79. Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 182: "The pavement up to the threshold of the altar is an open book of the prehistory of Christ, which, by virtue of its prophetic character among pagans and Jews, is the foundation of the church and the soli on which it is built." The marble pavement dates from 1369–1562, and many Sieneese artists contributed to the project, Pinturicchio and Beccafumi among them. See M. Caciorgana and R. Guerrini, *Il pavimento del Duomo di Siena: L'arte della tarsia marmorea dal XIV al XIX secolo fonti e simbologia* (Siena, 2004); and R. H. Hobart Cust, *I maestri del pavimento del duomo di Siena, 1369–1562*, trans. L. Coppi (Siena, 2000), originally published in 1901 as *The Pavement Masters of Siena* (London, 1901).
80. The marble pavement program includes only two scenes from the New Testament: the Expulsion of Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents. Ohly does not comment on them other than to suggest they were incorporated to make an iconographic connection with Nicola Pisano's pulpit, which also contains a scene of the Massacre of the Innocents. Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 188.
81. *Ibid.*, 182.
82. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechihalem Prophetam* 2.4.9, CCCM, 142, ed. M. Adriaen (Turnhout, 1971), lines 277–79, 285–88, 294–95: "Quid ergo latitudo liminis portae, nisi lex Testamenti ueteris fuit, et longitudo portae, nisi gratia Testamenti noui? . . . Minora quippe praecepta Israelitico populo per legem data sunt, unde et eidem populo Moyses in campo locutus est. Altiora Dominus sanctis apostolis dedit, unde et eos de mandatis utiae in monte docuit. . . Intellecta ergo lex, quae in latitudine jacuit, in altitudinem surrexit." Translated by A. Kumler and C. R. Lakey. Emphasis indicates the passage Ohly quotes, citing Migne, PL 76, 179A. Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 187.
83. One has the sense that Ohly ("The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 232) is implicitly engaging with Krautheimer's work on the iconology of architectural forms throughout the text even though he downplays any kind of particular analytic or historiographic relationship to Krautheimer (even in Excursus 3, where Ohly explicitly takes up the question of the interpretation of architectural forms, though he does cite Krautheimer there). See Ohly, "The Cathedral as Temporal Space," 232; see R. Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," *AB*, 24/1 (1942), 1–38; and idem, "Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture," *JWCI*, 5 (1942), 1–33. For a systematic account of the historiographical impact of Krautheimer's legacy, see C. C. McCurrach, "Renovatio Reconsidered: Richard Krautheimer and the Iconography of Architecture," *Gesta* 50/1 (2011), 41–70.

