

# Five “Romanesque” Portals: Questions of Attribution and Ornament

AMY L. VANDERSALL

*Professor of Art History, University of Colorado, Boulder*

IN THE 1950s, when parts of the William Randolph Hearst collections were dispersed, the Los Angeles County Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, received gifts of Romanesque marble portals, said to come from southern France.<sup>1</sup> The two Los Angeles portals and the one in Detroit constitute a set of three by virtue of their structure and ornament (Figures 1–3); two at The Cloisters form a related pair, exhibiting like construction but different ornamentation (Figures 4, 5). For each portal ten stones of similar unequal dimensions are piled in groups of five to form posts which support a roughly rectangular lintel over an opening of slightly more than six feet, about the height of a domestic doorway.<sup>2</sup> All the portals are decorated with low-relief ornament. The Los Angeles and Detroit examples employ an abstract vocabulary of interlace and spirals, while the pair at The Cloisters use leaf and vine designs. Hearst purchased all five portals from Arnold Seligmann, Rey & Co. in the thirties.<sup>3</sup>

On the inside edges of the jambs of the Los Angeles and Detroit portals, low-relief carving imitates delicate spiral columns resting on bases of torus moldings and surmounted with capitals composed of a circlet of leaves and tiny volutes separated by a rectangular block. On the lintel stone a band of interlace springs from above the capitals of the jamb, arching over a roundel which in turn encloses an equal-armed Greek cross with gently flared ends. The cross and roundel are punctuated with drill holes. Details of the ornament vary from one portal to another.<sup>4</sup> Two column bases (mismatched on the portals in Figures 1 and 2) show a double, the others a triple, torus molding. One pair of capitals exhibits leaves resembling

those on Cistercian water-leaf capitals, another pair palmette leaves, and the third pair forms reminiscent of Gothic crocket capitals. One arch displays a simple two-strand twist (guilloche), another a three-strand interlace, and the third a reversing S-curve design. All the lintels show three grades of depth moving inward from the front plane on which the arch and its interlacing design are incised, to that of the cross, and finally to that of the roundel. The condition of the sculpture is good. The blocks of stone show damage at their outer edges, and the surface of the spiral columns is abraded in places; but there appears to be no significant weathering of the marble's surface.

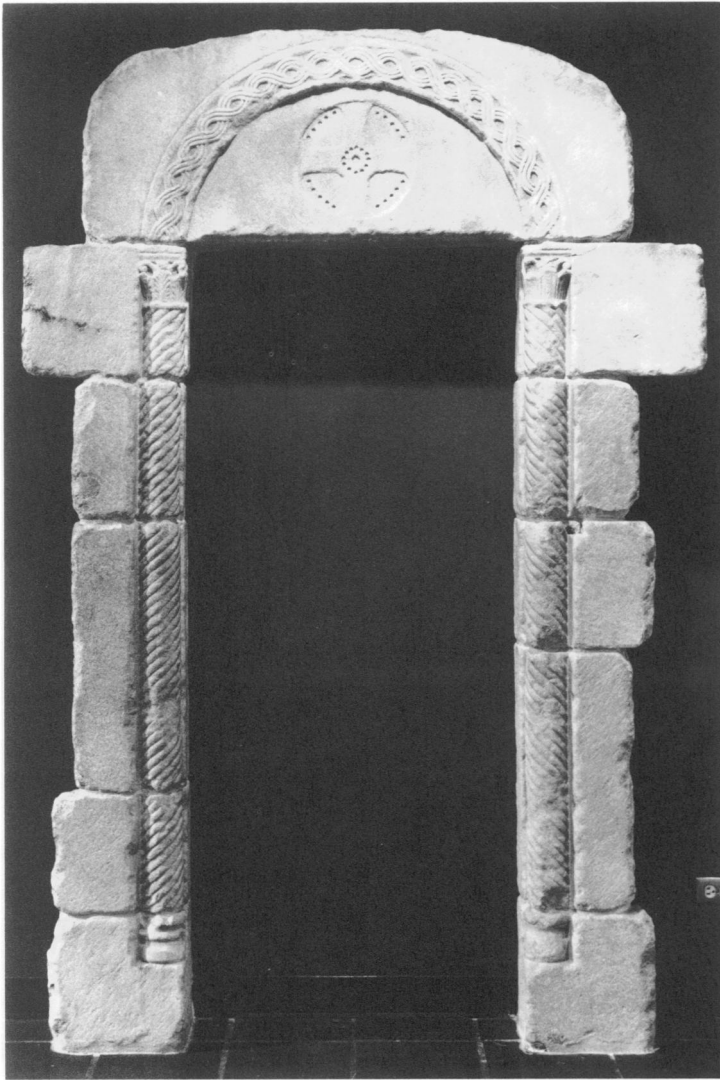
When the portals arrived at the museums they had already been identified as Romanesque, no doubt by

1. Hearst's gift to Los Angeles in 1950 contained other items which the author published in *Gesta* 19/1 (1980) pp. 51–66 as part of the series “Romanesque Sculpture in American Museums.” The museum deaccessioned the two portals in 1982 (Sotheby Parke Bernet Los Angeles, sale 341, June 21–23, lots 162, 163), and their present location is unknown; for convenience they will be referred to throughout this essay as the Los Angeles portals. Mrs. Edsel B. Ford gave the portal to the Detroit Museum in 1958 and it was first published in *Gesta* 10/2 (1971) p. 71. The Cloisters portals came from the Hearst Foundation in 1954.

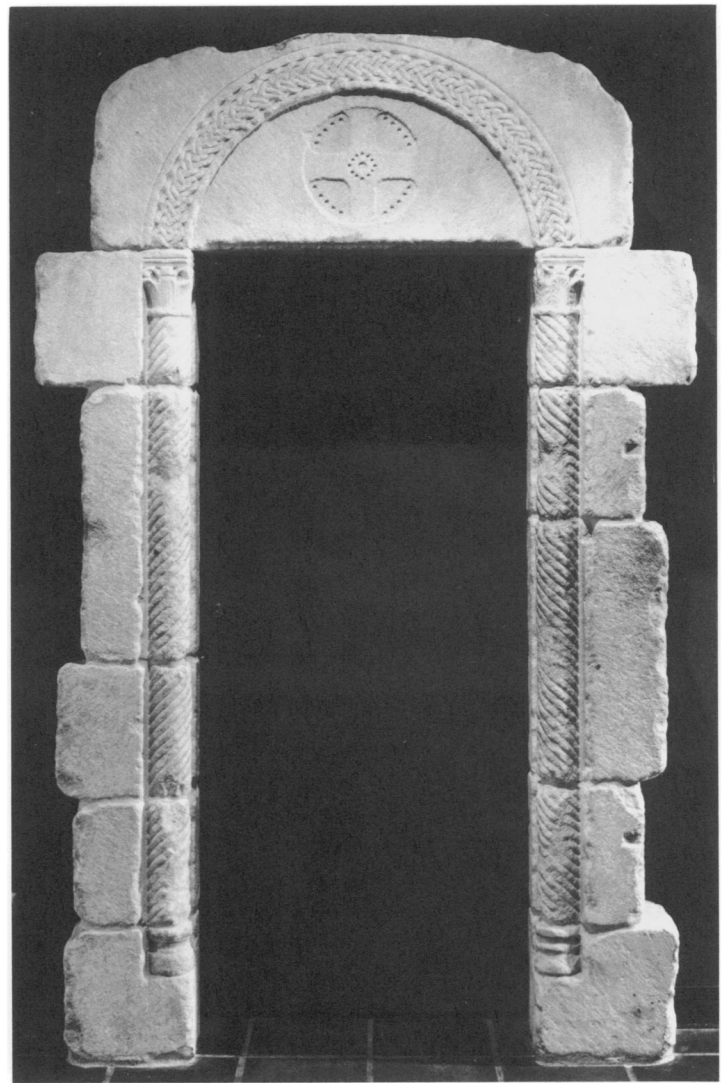
2. Los Angeles nos. 50.33.30,32 (opening, 6 ft. 4 in. × 2 ft. 8 in.; overall, 8 ft. ¼ in. × 4 ft. 8 in.); Detroit no. 58.89 (overall, 8 ft. 4 in. × 5 ft.); New York nos. 54.164.2,3 (opening, 6 ft. 4 in. × 2 ft. 7½ in.; overall, 7 ft. 9 in. × 5 ft. 5 in.).

3. The Hearst records for the Los Angeles portals are lost but those for the Detroit and New York portals exist in Notebook no. 80 among the Hearst records preserved at C. W. Post College on Long Island.

4. The photographs of the Los Angeles portals show a reconstruction which has mixed the jambs of the two portals, probably incorrectly.



1. Portal. Marble, 8 ft.  $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  $\times$  4 ft. 8 in. (2.45  $\times$  1.42 m.). Formerly Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of William Randolph Hearst, 50.33.32 (photo: Los Angeles County Museum)

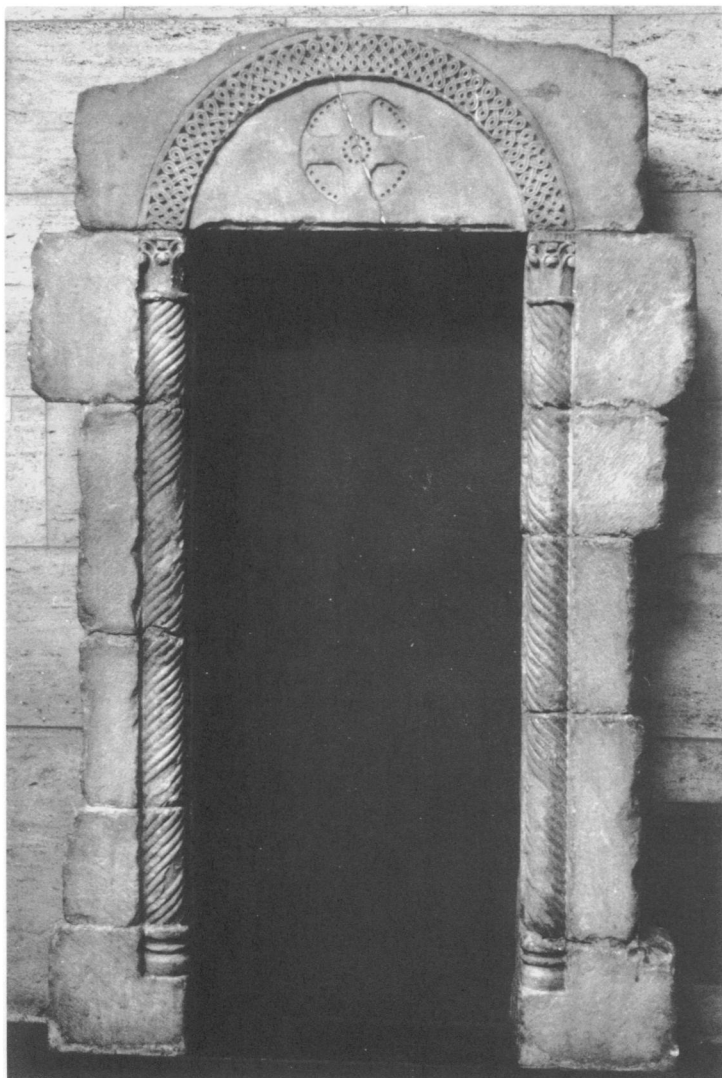


2. Portal. Marble, 8 ft.  $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  $\times$  4 ft. 8 in. (2.45  $\times$  1.42 m.). Formerly Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of William Randolph Hearst, 50.33.30 (photo: Los Angeles County Museum)

the dealer from whom Hearst had acquired them: the Los Angeles pair were said to date from the eleventh century and to come from the town of Montréjeau in the north central Pyrenean region (Haute-Garonne); the one in Detroit, from the twelfth century and St.-Bertrand-de-Comminges, a well-known monastery with major Romanesque remains not far from Montréjeau. Presumably the eleventh-century date for the Los Angeles portals derived from comparison of the relief style with several low-relief sculptures in the northeastern Pyrenees (Roussillon)—for example, the early Romanesque marble lintel at St.-Genis-des-Fontaines dated by inscription to 1019—

20.<sup>5</sup> The delicacy of the reliefs may have been the reason for the twelfth-century designation given to the Detroit portal, the assumption being that refinement indicates a style in its later stages, that is, mature Romanesque. But we do not know who dated

5. The St.-Genis-des-Fontaines lintel and other similar marble sculptures in Roussillon, although embedded into the architectural fabric of facades, appear to be reused fragments of church fittings. Their style is generally viewed as an intermediate step between the developed Romanesque of the later 11th century and early medieval carving found in northern Italy and southern France (see M. Durliat, *Roussillon roman* [La-Pierre-qui-Vire, 1958] pp. 84ff.).



3. Portal. Marble, 8 ft. 4 in. × 5 ft. (2.54 × 1.52 m.). The Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mrs. Edsel B. Ford, 58.89 (photo: Detroit Institute of Arts)

the portals or why their provenance was given as central Pyrenean. One thing is certain, however: the portals could not have come from Montréjeau or from the monastery of St.-Bertrand-de-Comminges. The buildings of the Augustinian convent at Montréjeau date from the fourteenth century. Nothing remains at the site and in 1962 the cloister was reconstructed as a tourist attraction at Nassau in the Bahamas.<sup>6</sup> Nor does any of the marble sculpture at St.-Bertrand-de-Comminges resemble the portal carvings.<sup>7</sup> It is not unusual, however, for an early attribution to be incorrect in its details.

If not from Montréjeau or St.-Bertrand-de-

Comminges, could the portals have come from another site in southern France? Let us examine briefly two hypotheses. One that the author conceived and researched would view the portals as opening from a cloister into, for example, a church or refectory.<sup>8</sup> They are too small and too numerous to have formed part of a monumental Romanesque facade. At Flaran (Gers), a Cistercian abbey in southern France situated to the north of St.-Bertrand-de-Comminges and Montréjeau, there is a portal leading from the cloister into the church (Figure 6) whose tympanum displays in low-relief carving three roundels which enclose two small crosses and a large monogram (the latter appears to be a variant of the *chi-rho* with additions difficult to explain).<sup>9</sup> This abbey is the daughter of the now ruined monastery of L'Escale-Dieu located due south of Flaran—closer to Montréjeau and St.-Bertrand. Unfortunately, this geographic postulate is not valid. What sculpture remains at L'Escale-Dieu, some water-leaf capitals in the chapter house and on the few remaining arcades of the cloister, bears no stylistic relationship to the Hearst portals, and the marble also is dissimilar.<sup>10</sup>

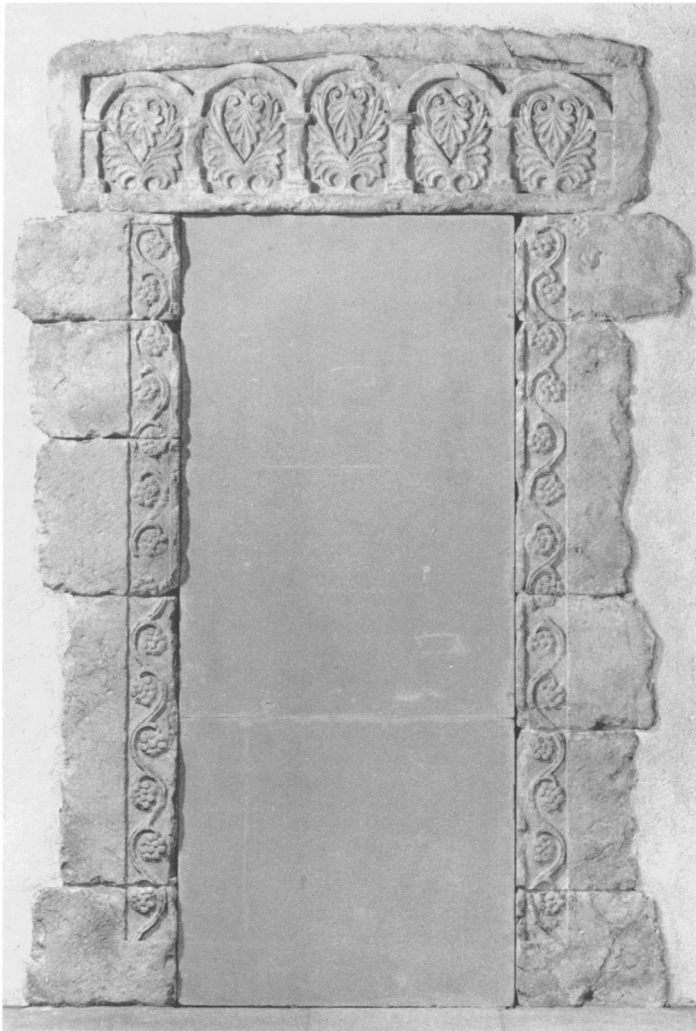
6. See Elie de Comminges, "Sur deux portes du XIIe siècle," *Revue de Comminges* 89 (1976) pp. 57–58; Abbé A. Dumail, "Le Cloître des Augustins de Montréjeau en Amérique central?," *ibid.* 86 (1973) pp. 352–362; and Baron de Lassus, "Le Couvent des Augustins de Montréjeau," *ibid.* 6 (1891) pp. 20–51.

7. For a description of the Romanesque sculpture at St.-Bertrand-de-Comminges, see M. Durliat and V. Allègre, *Pyénées romanes* (La-Pierre-qui-Vire, 1969) pp. 147–164. Compare also a pair of capitals in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (W. Cahn, "Romanesque Sculpture in American Collections: XI. The Philadelphia Museum of Art," *Gesta* 13/1 [1974] p. 61, figs. 27, 28, and M. Weinberger, *The George Grey Barnard Collection* [New York, 1941] pl. XII, no. 35).

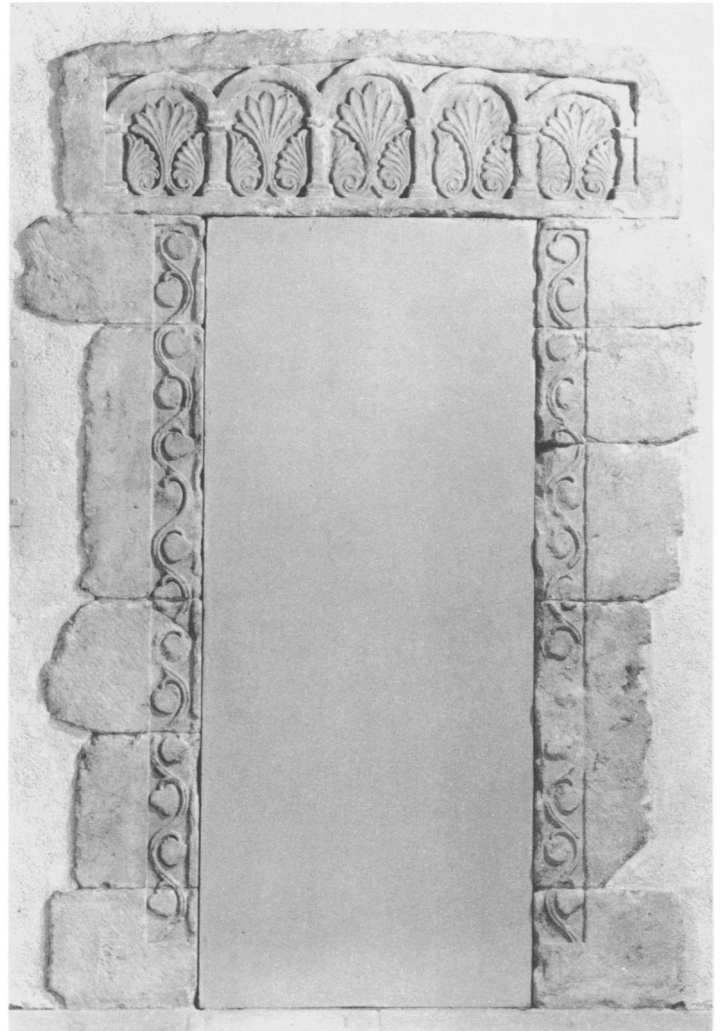
8. An ideal plan of a Cistercian monastery published by A. Dimier, *L'Art cistercien* (La-Pierre-qui-Vire, 1967) p. 45, shows, for example, seven doorways exiting from the cloister.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 260. Marcel Aubert (*L'Architecture cistercienne en France*, 2nd ed. [Paris, 1947] I, p. 358) states that the 12th-century tympanum sculpture at Flaran has no sequel in Cistercian abbeys before the end of the 13th century, becoming more common in the 14th and 15th centuries. I have located one other decorated cloister portal, at the Cistercian abbey of St.-Paul-de-Mausole (Provence), which shows fluted archivolts radiating from a simple arched doorway; see M. Aubert, *L'Art français à l'époque romane* (Morance, 1929) IV, pl. 45.

10. Dimier, *L'Art cistercien*, pp. 76ff., and Aubert, *L'Architecture cistercienne*, I, pp. 73, 165–166; II, pp. 41, 65. I wish to thank Molly and Keith Singer for making a detour to L'Escale-Dieu to check the stone and the extent of the remains. Students of Romanesque sculpture often ask whether identification of the source



4. Portal. Marble, 7 ft. 9 in. × 5 ft. 5 in. (2.36 × 1.65 m.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, Gift of The Hearst Foundation, 54.164.2



5. Portal. Marble, 7 ft. 9 in. × 5 ft. 5 in. (2.36 × 1.65 m.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, Gift of The Hearst Foundation, 54.164.3

The second hypothesis, of Walter Cahn,<sup>11</sup> is more interesting from a stylistic point of view. It is based on a comparison with a twelfth-century portal, now in

---

of the marble is a positive aid in attribution of dislocated carvings. Such knowledge is certainly useful, but although most marbles are now classified and scientifically identifiable, old quarries can be reopened (see O. Kurz, *Fakes: A Handbook for Collectors and Students* [New Haven, 1948] p. 126; L. Jeppson, *The Fabulous Frauds: Fascinating Tales of Great Art Forgeries* [New York, 1970] pp. 809; and a discussion concerning purchases of marble in southern France in Dumail, "Le Cloître des Augustins . . .," pp. 361–362).

11. Cahn, "Romanesque Sculpture in American Collections: VII. The Detroit Institute of Arts," *Gesta* 10/2 (1971) p. 71.

the Louvre, from Ste.-Cécile, Estagel (Gard), a monastery in southeast France between Nîmes and St.-Gilles-du-Gard (Figure 7). Clearly of greater architectural importance than Hearst's small doorways, the Estagel portal stands over thirteen feet tall. It is decorated primarily with foliage designs executed in a two-plane relief style. Bordering the running leaf motif on the lintel is a tight interlace design quite similar in spirit to the ornament decorating the arched bands on the Los Angeles and Detroit portals. In the Louvre catalogue Marcel Aubert and Michèle Beaulieu point out that the decoration on the Estagel portal is archaizing, that it harks back to early medieval designs produced from about the seventh through the ninth

century in northern Italy and southeast France.<sup>12</sup> But this hypothesis, like the author's, does not stand closer scrutiny: not only does the scale of the Estagel portal differ from that of the Los Angeles and Detroit examples, but also there is little or no additional stylistic evidence from Provence that can strengthen the Estagel suggestion. This negative evidence serves one purpose at least: it underlines visually the tenuous nature of the attribution of a southern French provenance for the portals. What positive evidence is there?

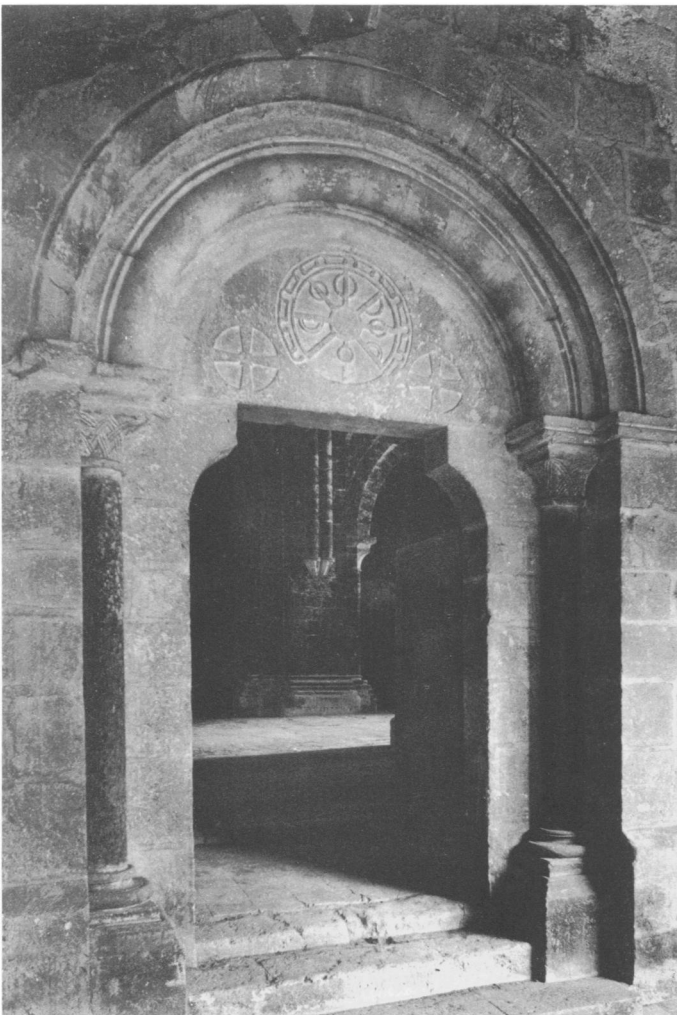
12. "Quant aux entrelacs tressés comme un ouvrage de vannerie, ils sont particulièrement nombreux aux époques mérovingienne et carolingienne, notamment en Lombardie et en Catalogne" (M. Aubert and M. Beaulieu, *Description raisonnée de sculptures du Moyen Age, de la Renaissance et des temps modernes* [Paris, 1950] I, pp. 27–28).

13. The major compendium of this material is the multi-volume *Corpus della scultura altomedievale*, Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1959ff.). For Ravenna and Rome see in addition "*Corpus*" della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed

The ornamental vocabulary of the portals, and to a large extent its syntax, appear to derive not from Romanesque France but from pre-Romanesque art that flourished in Italy and contiguous areas (especially Catalonia) after the Lombards invaded northern Italy in 568.<sup>13</sup> The style lasted for about two hundred years after Charlemagne deposed the last Lombard king, Desiderius, in 794. Major remains of Lombard sculpture are preserved in such towns as Pavia, Milan, Cividale, and Monza—sites which lie

*altomedievale di Ravenna*, Istituto di antichità Ravennati e Bizantine dell'Università di Bologna, ed. G. Bovini, 3 vols. (Rome, 1968–69), and L. Pani Ermini, "Note sulla decorazione dei cibori a Roma nell'alto medioevo," *Bollettino d'Arte* 59 (1974) pp. 115–126. For earlier publication of the material, see esp. R. Kautsch, "Die römische Schmuckkunst in Stein vom 6. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 3 (1939) pp. 1–74, and "Die langobardische Schmuckkunst in Oberitalien," *ibid.* 5 (1944) pp. 1–48.

6. Portal, 12th century. Stone. Abbey of Flaran (photo: Reportage photographique Yan)



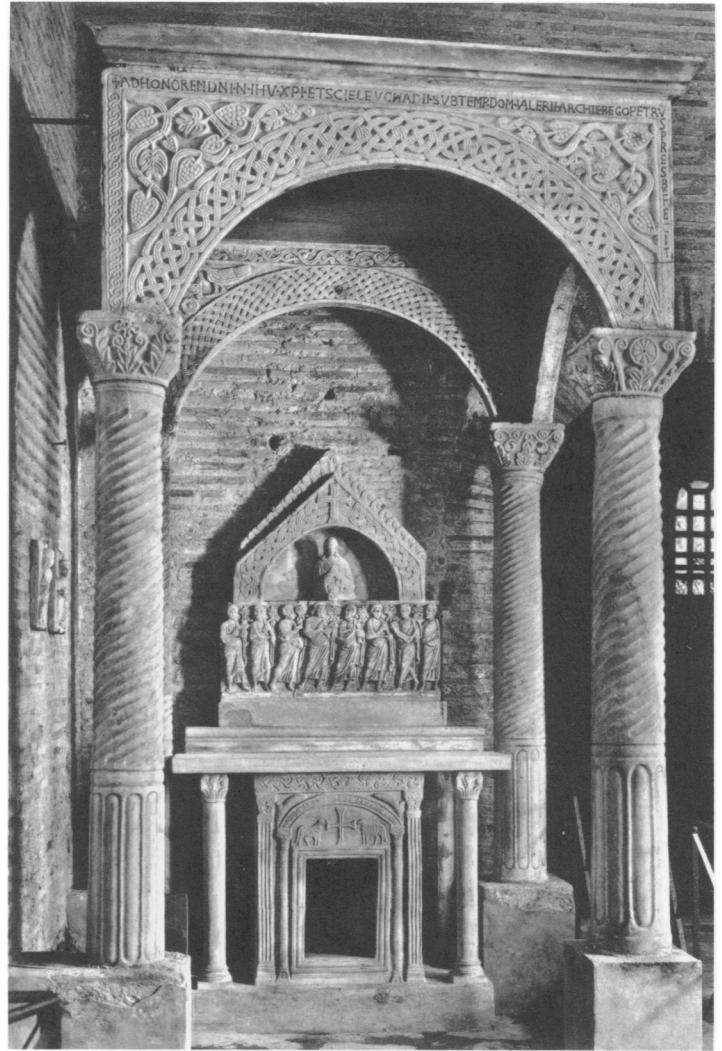
7. Portal, from the priory of Estagel, 12th century. Sandstone. Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: © Arch. Phot. Paris/S.P.A.D.E.M.)



within the former Lombard kingdom or the semi-independent Lombard dukedoms—as well as at Venice, Ravenna, and Rome, in areas never ruled by the Lombards. Stucco and marble are the media for Lombard sculpture. The former was used for interior decoration while the latter is found on church furniture—for example, ciboria, baptismal fonts, altars, and relief plaques (*transennae*). Lombard marble carving, the medium that concerns us here, is flat and executed in low relief. It combines motifs from the metalwork of the formerly migrating Lombard tribe with ornament and symbols drawn from early Christian and classical art. On the marble surfaces of the liturgical objects the interlace and plait designs of migration art mix with such early Christian and classical motifs as vines, leaves, and fruit, motifs often subjected to the symmetry and geometric order of the other's aesthetic. The human figure occasionally appears; more frequently, birds, lions, griffins, and the symbols of the evangelists are locked into symmetrical compositions around the cross or the tree of life.

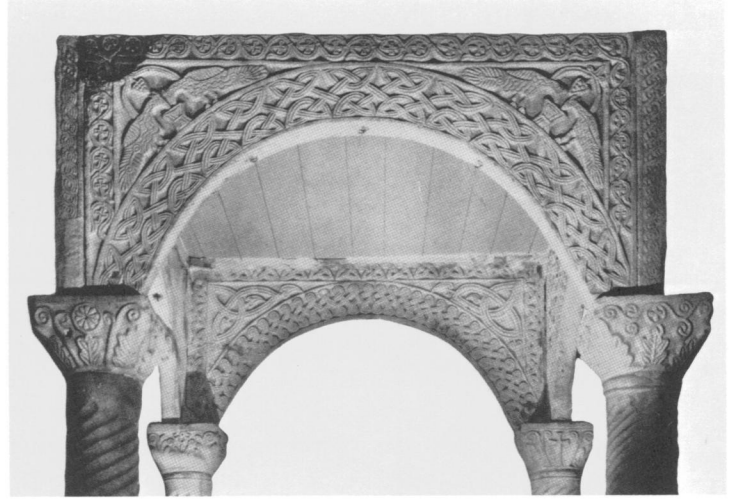
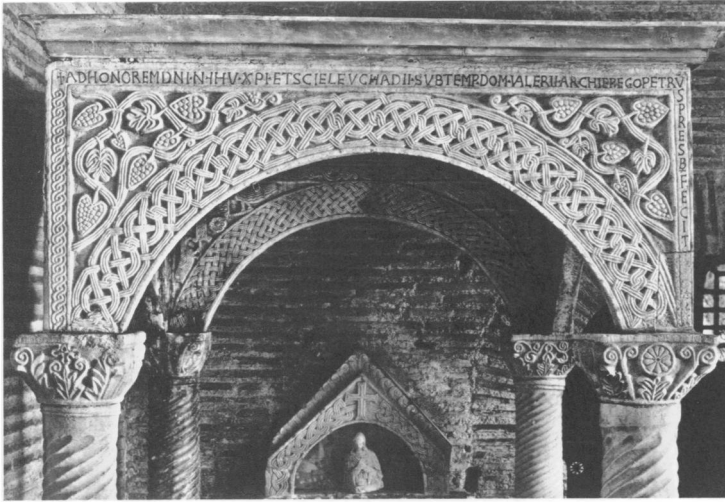
Within the body of Lombard sculpture there is a fine marble ciborium housed in the church of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna; it came from Sant'Eleucadio, a church also located in Classe, the former seaport town for Ravenna on the Adriatic (Figures 8–10). The ciborium is dated by inscription to 806–810. Its superstructure, rising on four columns decorated with spirals and fluting, is composed of rectangular panels into which semicircular openings have been cut to form arches. (Two sides of the ciborium abut the church walls so that their outer arches are obstructed from view.) Around the arches and on the remaining spandrellike surface are spun flat Lombard designs. The decorative vocabulary recalls that of the three arches of the Los Angeles and Detroit portals. There are, first, the spiral designs of the columns; second, the simple twist edging some of the vertical sides of the rectangular lintels; third, the S-curve design on the inside of one of the arches; and finally, an interlace design on the inside of another. In sum, all three interlace motifs on the lintels of the Hearst portals are found on the ciborium and together with other comparable motifs.

A closer examination of the ciborium's ornament reveals some important differences, however. First, the guilloche bordering many of the vertical edges of the ciborium's lintels is twisted more tightly than that on the lintel of the Los Angeles portal (cf. Figures 8–10



and 1) and, judging from available photographs, is usually composed of bipartite strands rather than tripartite ones as on the portal arch (see the left vertical border in Figure 10 for the use of tripartite strands on the ciborium).<sup>14</sup> Second, the interlace on the inside arch of the ciborium displays a complex six-strand plait whereas that on the other Los Angeles portal

14. Although I have been unable to check the Ravenna ciborium, it is possible that the arch on one of the two lintels whose outsides presently abut walls in Sant'Apollinare in Classe (apparently never photographed) displays a guilloche with tripartite strands. A guilloche composed of tripartite strands is used in precisely the same way to decorate one arch of the seven lintels of the well-known Lombard baptismal font (737–756) in Sta. Maria Assunta in Cividale and on a fragment of a ciborium from the church of S. Basilio in Rome (see *Corpus della scultura altomedievale: X. Aquileia e Grado* [1981] pl. LXXXVII, and VII/2. *Roma* [1974] pl. xxvi).



8–10. Ciborium, from Sant'Eleucadio, Ravenna, 806–810. Marble. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare in Classe (photos: 8, 9. Anderson; 10. Istituto di Antichità Ravennati e Bizantine)

exhibits a simpler three-strand one (cf. Figures 9 and 2). Third, the S-curve design edging the ciborium arch uses two strands which actually interlace while that on the Detroit portal shows only one strand (cf. Figures 10 and 3). Thus the motifs on the three portals are simplified or looser versions of those on the ciborium. It is not merely that the three designs used for the arches of the three portals are found together in Ravenna on one Italian marble ciborium of the ninth century, but also that these specific ornamental details are very common in Lombard decoration and not in Romanesque sculpture.

The delicate spiral relief columns edging the jambs of the three portals differ significantly, of course, from the real spiral columns that support the ciborium's lintels. A convenient source for them, however, can be found in a relief from a sixth-century marble altar now installed with other fragments at Sant'Apollinare in Classe, in fact just under the Sant'Eleucadio ciborium (see Figure 8).<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the cross, both the Greek and Latin form, occurs frequently in Lombard art and its arms terminate in one of two ways. Either they flare outward gently or tiny volutes curl laterally from the exterior corners of each arm. Both types are seen on the ciborium from Sant'Eleucadio—the flared type on one of the capitals (Figure 10) and the volute type on two of the inside spandrels of one lintel (Figure 9). It is perhaps also significant that the flared terminal is by

far the most common in Ravenna—from early Christian sarcophagi to Lombard sculpture—whereas the volute type is used almost invariably in Roman monuments of the same period.<sup>16</sup> Nowhere, however, does drill work like that on the portals appear either in conjunction with the cross or otherwise; it seems to have no precedent in Lombard sculpture.

Furthermore, there is something very un-Romanesque about the Hearst portals. Their composition violates the architectonic aesthetic of the Romanesque style. Their arches are decorative embellishments of

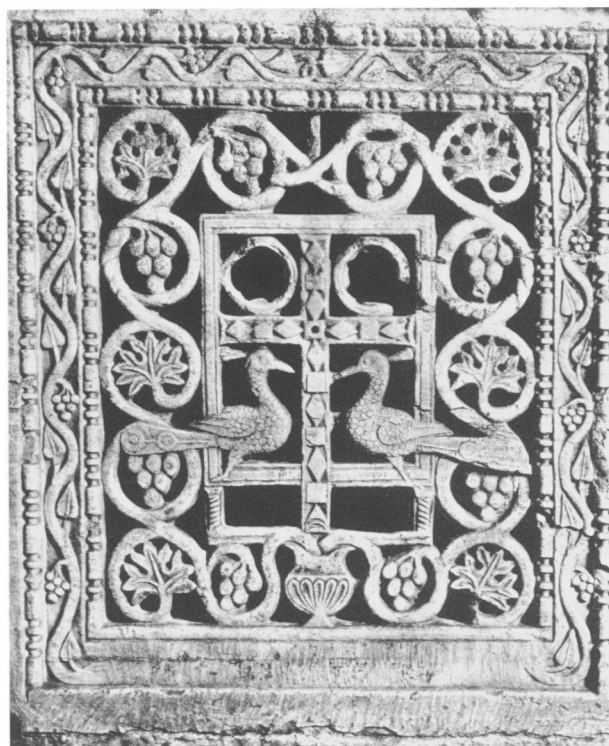
15. See P. Angiolini Martinelli, "Altare . . .," in *Corpus della scultura . . . di Ravenna*, I, pls. 1–15, for illustrations of other similar altars from S. Giovanni Evangelista, S. Francesco, and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. At this point a further explanation is in order. There are examples in Italian Romanesque sculpture of spiral relief columns edging jambs of portals. Wiligelmo, for example, sculpted them on the main portal of the facade at Modena in the second decade of the 12th century (see conveniently the illustration in the *Encyclopedia of World Art*, XIV, pl. 424). We must note, however, the monumental scale of Wiligelmo's portal and the fact that his spiral column decorates, or rather is, the intermediate jamb in the stepped recession between the forward plane of the facade and the major jamb of the portal (decorated with vines and figures under arches)—in short, the Modena column is part of the architecture, probably *en délit* (that is, cut horizontally along the bed of the quarry and uprighted), meaning that the stone is not compressible and hence it stabilizes the jambs. The spiral columns on the Hearst portals serve no architectural function in the jambs.

16. For bibliography on this material, see note 13 above.

rectangular lintel stones; so are those on the Sant' Eleucadio ciborium. The difference between them is that on the portals the stone has not been removed below the arched band of ornament. Romanesque architecture is by and large arcuated—that is, arched as distinguished from trabeated, post-and-lintel construction—and Romanesque decoration conforms to the arcuation. The Estagel portal in the Louvre (Figure 7) demonstrates well the Romanesque aesthetic; each ornamental episode complements the architectural shape or function of the member it decorates. The lintel shows a floral design across its horizontal surface and this ornamental band is framed on all four sides with a border of interlace. Both ornamental passages emphasize the low rectangular shape of the lintel stone. The rinceau decoration on the semicircular surface of the tympanum proper is adjusted to both the horizontal base which rests upon the lintel (the half-circle leaf design) and the arched circumference of the tympanum (full-circle vine motif). Finally, the radiating leaf design on the archivolt above the tympanum echoes the trapezoidal shape of the voussoirs upon which they are carved.

The arched bands on the Hearst portals are solely pictorial; they have no relationship whatsoever to the post-and-lintel structure of the doorways. It is highly improbable that a Romanesque sculptor, who was certainly also a mason, would use such arcuated ornament for a lintel. Thus our portals fail two primary tests of authenticity. Their aesthetic is not Romanesque—that is, not architectonic; and the vocabulary of their decoration belongs to an earlier period—that is, it is anachronistic. That the portals could be Lombard is inadmissible as well: there are no such decorated marble doorways on Lombard buildings.

The structure of the portals at The Cloisters (Figures 4 and 5) is basically identical to that of the Los Angeles and Detroit examples—jambs composed of five stones capped with a lintel. The low-relief carving is comparable, and the provenance is also said to be Montréjeau and the date twelfth century. Along the vertical edges of their jambs runs an undulating rinceau which, on one portal, enfolds broad, somewhat heart-shaped leaves and, on the other, clusters of grapes or berries. The lintels of both New York portals are decorated with five big leaves set under a simplified arcade which rises gently from either side to form a slight pediment. This is accomplished by a



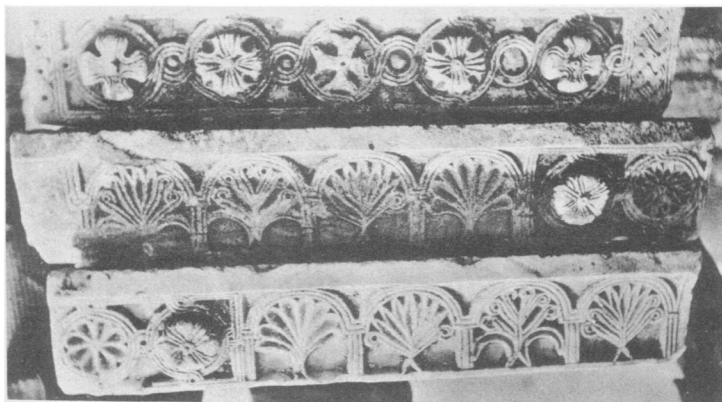
11. Transenna, 6th century. Marble. Ravenna, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (photo: Anderson)

variation in layers of relief like that of the Los Angeles and Detroit lintels. On one, a palmette leaf spreads apart down its center to permit a second, smaller leaf to hang upside down in the opening; on the other lintel the leaves resemble a tall fan which sprouts half palmettes from each side of its narrow base.

As is the case with the Los Angeles and Detroit doorways, French Romanesque art provides almost no comparable examples of the ornamental vocabulary of the Cloisters portals.<sup>17</sup> But since these resemble the Los Angeles and Detroit portals in their structure and low-relief carving, one would expect to find comparisons for their decorative vocabulary among the same Italo-Lombard monuments. To an extent we do, although Lombard art generally deals less in vegetal motifs than in purely abstract forms. The roundels

17. The closest ones I have located are for the hanging leaves (Figure 4): the 11th-century window frame on the facade at Arles-sur-Tech shows an encircled hanging leaf (see Durliat, *Roussillon roman*, fig. 8); the sarcophagus of Petrus a Fonte Salubri, d. 1110, at Airvault displays a similar vocabulary of leaf forms but a different syntax (see E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* [London, 1964] fig. 182).





enclosing the evangelist symbols on the eighth-century Sigwald relief in Cividale, for example, display an undulating vine enclosing heart-shaped leaves, although considerably more attenuated and abstract than the rounded leaves on the portal.<sup>18</sup> Also there are a few instances of leaf forms enshrined under arches, as well as some leaf compositions reminiscent of the tripartite forms under the arches on the lintels of the Cloisters portals.<sup>19</sup> But by far the clearest parallels are found in medieval Byzantine sculpture of the sixth through eleventh centuries, whether on Italian soil or elsewhere.

To take first the jambs of the Cloisters portals: their rinceau vine enclosing on one portal heart-shaped

12. Plaque, from Galata-Arap Camii, Istanbul, 10th century. Marble. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum (photo: after Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople*)

13. Cornice, from the "Round Church," Preslav, 10th century. Preslav, Archaeological Museum (photo: after Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople*)

14. Architectural fragments, 11th century. Bakay (photo: after Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge*)

leaves and on the other bunches of grapes or clusters of berries can be related to the ivy carved on the outside borders of a sixth-century vine transenna from Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna (Figure 11), simply by separating the leaves of that vine from its alternating clusters of berries—even if this does violate nature by producing in one case a leafless but fruit-bearing vine (Figure 4).<sup>20</sup> An excellent parallel for the ornament on one of the lintels, that with the upside-down leaves (Figure 4), can be seen on a tenth-century marble slab in Istanbul (Figure 12).<sup>21</sup> The fanlike leaf flanked by half palmettes on the other lintel (Figure 5) can be compared to leaf forms on a Byzantine slab from Preslav, Bulgaria (Figure 13), although most often such half leaves embrace a cross or a crosslike form.<sup>22</sup> Leaves enshrined under arches are also common in Byzantine sculpture (Figure 14).<sup>23</sup>

18. *Corpus della scultura altomedievale*: X. *Aquileia e Grado*, pl. xcvi. See also *ibid.*: II. *Spoletto*, pls. vi, vii.

19. See, for leaves under arches, *ibid.*: II. *Spoletto*, pl. lvii; VIII. *Alto Lazio*, pls. cxxvi, lxxxii; X. *Aquileia e Grado*, pl. cxciv; and for leaf forms, I. *Lucca*, pl. x; IV. *Genoa*, pl. xi.

20. The 6th-century artist distinguishes clearly the ivy (*hedera helix*) from the grape, which is depicted growing from the chalice to form a frame for the central cross.

21. For this and other examples, see A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVe-Xe siècle)*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul XVIII (Paris, 1963) pls. lxiii, xliv (Thebes); *idem*, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge, II (XIe-XIVe siècle)*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques (Paris, 1976) pls. xviii, xxv (Hosios Lukos); K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons* (Princeton, 1976) Icon B60 (back).

22. See Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople*, pls. xxix, xli (Scripou), xlvi, l–lii (Istanbul, Fener Issa), lxiii (Preslav); *idem*, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge*, pl. lvii (Kiev). For a discussion of the motif see D. Talbot Rice, "The Leaved Cross," *Byzantinoslavica* 11 (1950) pp. 68–81.

23. See Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge*, pls. xi (Bakay), xiii, xiv (Smyrna), xxv (Hosios Lukos), lviii (Kiev), lxxv (Megara), cxx (Aphida).

When all five portals are viewed together—as they must be, given their similar relief styles and structures—it is quite impossible to entertain either a Romanesque date or a French provenance for them. The parallels between their ornament and that of the ninth-century ciborium of Sant’Eleucadio in Ravenna seem too extensive to be the result of mere chance. And the use of a different category of ornament for the Cloisters portals demonstrates, should further proof be needed, the spurious nature of these French “Romanesque” doorways.

Thus the inevitable query—are all of these pieces forgeries? Was deception the motive for their creation? The answer is probably yes. Otto Kurz has remarked that “forgery on a large scale need only be feared when the demand considerably exceeds the supply. . . .”<sup>24</sup> Historically this appears to be precisely the context in which Hearst acquired the five portals. During the period between the world wars, Hearst, who has been described as “a compulsive accumulator,”<sup>25</sup> was building his castle at San Simeon in California. Designed by architect Julia Morgan, the structure incorporated ancient and medieval architectural fragments and served as a showplace for Hearst’s extensive collection of paintings, sculptures, tapestries, furniture, and domestic furnishings of all kinds. Hearst literally filled warehouses in California and New York with his wholesale acquisitions. Perhaps the largest, though not the only purchase of its kind, was the Spanish monastery of Sta. Maria de Ovila.<sup>26</sup>

Although the collecting of medieval art was fostered by the romantic movement of the nineteenth century, the purchase of Romanesque stone sculpture began only at the end of the century. Prior to World War I, the American sculptor George Grey Barnard amassed in France a large collection of such objects, partly with the motive of providing American artists with the opportunity of seeing the work of medieval craftsmen, and partly to sell in order to pay creditors in connection with his mismanagement of the production of sculptures he contracted to make for the new Pennsylvania state house in Harrisburg. Barnard shipped his collection to the United States in 1913 just before the war broke out and installed it in a museum he had built and called “The Cloisters.” In 1925 he sold that whole collection to The Metropolitan Museum of Art through funds provided by John D. Rockefeller and it became the nucleus for the present Cloisters in Fort Tryon Park. Then, between

the wars, Barnard began a second collection, which ultimately went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>27</sup>

Hearst and Barnard were thus in the market together in the decades of the twenties and thirties. In addition, other private collectors, such as Raymond Pitcairn, and museums, primarily Philadelphia, Worcester, and Boston, made significant purchases.<sup>28</sup> Also after 1913 the market for French antiquities was greatly tightened through legislation by the French government, designed to prevent large-scale exportation of the medieval French patrimony.<sup>29</sup>

This historical context helps to explain why a number of spurious pieces of French Romanesque sculpture ended up in American museums. The case of the Los Angeles, Detroit, and Cloisters portals is by no means unique. Museum curators and scholars are increasingly aware of such imitations,<sup>30</sup> although to remove them from exhibition is not always feasible.

Moreover, it has become increasingly easy to identify these fraudulent carvings. The corpus of early Christian and early medieval Italian sculpture has been more fully published. Beginning in 1967 under the auspices of the International Center of Medieval Art,

24. Kurz, *Fakes*, p. 48.

25. W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst* (New York, 1961) pp. 465–468.

26. The monastery was given to the city of San Francisco and is now at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. See A. Vandersall, “Romanesque Sculpture,” *Gesta* 19/1 (1980) pp. 51–66, and M. Burke, “Santa Maria de Ovila,” in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture*, ed. M. Lillich, I (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1982) pp. 78–85.

27. See H. E. Dickson, “The Origin of the Cloisters,” *Art Quarterly* 28 (1965) pp. 253–274, and J. L. Schrader, “George Grey Barnard: The Cloisters and The Abbaye,” *MMAB* 37/1 (1979).

28. See W. Cahn and L. Seidel, *Romanesque Sculpture in American Collections: I. New England Museums* (New York, 1979) pp. 1–16; C. R. Morey, “Medieval Art in America,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944) pp. 1–6; and *Radiance and Reflection: Medieval Art from the Raymond Pitcairn Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: MMA, 1982), intro. by J. Hayward, pp. 33–47.

29. Dickson, “The Origin of the Cloisters,” pp. 268–269; and *Congrès archéologique de France: XCVIIIe session à Paris en 1934* (Paris, 1936) pp. 187–295.

30. For example, a letter addressed to Peter Barnet from Professor Marcel Durliat in the files of the Metropolitan Museum lists a number of items. I have also discussed the problem with Professor Cahn, whom I would like to thank for information and for photographs of a large number of the items listed below.

Professor Walter Cahn, Yale University, undertook the systematic publication of Romanesque sculpture in American collections; this catalogue has appeared serially in the Center's bulletin *Gesta*, and one part has already been issued in book form.<sup>31</sup> This research, in which other scholars have participated, has turned up quite a number of inept imitations, which remain, appropriately, gathering dust in museum basements. It has also encouraged comparisons that document the falseness of the more accomplished productions such as the portals.

Nine other portals, one throne, one wall fountain, and one "mantel" may with reasonable certainty be attributed to the workshop that produced the five portals under discussion. These seventeen items all use flat, low-relief carving; their ornament derives primarily from Lombard or Byzantine decorative vocabulary; twelve pieces employ the spiral or twist in some manner; most of them passed through the hands of the dealers Paul Gouvert and/or Seligmann, Rey & Co.; their stated provenance is southern France (Montréjeau, St.-Bertrand-des-Comminges, St.-Genis-des-Fontaines, Cuxa (?), Sardagne [*sic*] / Cerdagne,

"French Pyrenean marble"); the stone is usually marble (white, often blushed with rose, or red and white as found in Roussillon—as, for example, at Cuxa); all but one of the portals employ a domestic scale approaching eight feet; all but one exhibit a post-and-lintel structure (posts of five or six stones of varied height and width).<sup>32</sup>

Identification of a forger's sources is one of the definitive proofs of an imitation. But the revelation of the deception is ultimately less interesting and less significant than the understanding of the means of the deception. There is no better demonstration of the inherent logic of medieval ornament, both its vocabulary and its syntax, than fabricated decoration.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was presented at the Mid-West Art History Meetings held in Madison, Wisconsin, April 5–7, 1984. I would like to thank the following persons for their generous help with aspects of this essay: Peter Barnet, Walter Cahn, Helen Chillman, Ingeborg Glier, Carl Shepard, and Molly and Keith Singer.

31. Cahn and Seidel, *Romanesque Sculpture*.

32. I would identify the following items, listed with dealer, collection, and stated provenance where known. Brussels, Musée du Cinquantenaire: marble portal (according to Cahn, like the one in Ottawa, see below). Bryn Athyn, Pa., Pitcairn Collection: two portals (nos. 09.sp.96, 09.sp.104). Detroit Institute of Arts: pair of marble portals (nos. 58.267, 58.268), Hearst, Sardagne [*sic*]/Cerdagne; marble mantel (no. 58.275), Hearst, French Pyrenean marble. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada: marble portal (no. 16957), Cuxa(?). Philadelphia Museum of Art: pair of marble portals (nos. 29.121.1a,b), Gouvert, St.-Genis-des-Fontaines; marble portal (no. 45.25.125), Barnard (Weinberger, *Barnard Collection*, no. 126), vicinity of Montréjeau; sandstone

wall fountain (nos. 45.25.127, 45.25.128), Barnard (*ibid.*, nos. 127, 128), Montréjeau; marble throne (no. 29.109.1), Gouvert, St.-Genis-des-Fontaines. I wish to thank Charles T. Little, associate curator of Medieval Art in the Metropolitan Museum, for knowledge of the Pitcairn doorways.

In 1936, the firm of Arnold Seligmann sold a statue-column of the archangel Michael to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss (now Dumbarton Oaks, no. 36.21) which had been drastically restored, presumably to render its fragments more valuable (see P. Z. Blum, "An Archaeological Analysis of a Statue-Column from Saint-Maur-des-Fossés at Dumbarton Oaks," *Gesta* 17/2 [1978] pp. 23–28).