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Rereading Authorship at Saint-Urbain, Troyes

Since the 1950s, the papal collegiate church of Saint-Urbain at Troyes has been viewed as the product of two visually distinct building campaigns headed by different architects, the first exemplifying mid-thirteenth-century French Rayonnant architecture and the second embodying or presaging late medieval Flamboyant aesthetics. The present article challenges this narrative of linear progression by reexamining the architecture of the building’s little-studied west front and exploiting largely unpublished archival testimony. It attempts to demonstrate that matching specific sets of forms to (undocumented) individual architects is not as straightforward as hitherto thought, and that the choice of visual language was ultimately predicated as much on funding as on patronal intentions. In so doing, it updates the narrative of Saint-Urbain’s creation to comply with current scholarly conceptions about the material imprint of the artistic personalities of medieval architects.

Keywords: Gothic architecture; medieval France; Rayonnant style; Flamboyant style; papal patronage; architectural authorship

In a letter addressed in 1874 to the Minister of Public Instruction, Cults, and Fine Arts of the French Third Republic to solicit financial aid for the preservation of the thirteenth-century church of Saint-Urbain, the mayor of the city of Troyes, Louis Alban Henry, qualified the building as “a marvelous reliquary in ashlar, as delicate as a masterpiece of the goldsmith’s art” and “a glazed lantern of extreme lightness” (figs. 1–2). These and other such laudatory remarks made on that occasion, presumably both in the hope of securing material subsidy and in sincere admiration of the monument’s inherent aesthetic qualities, are echoed in eulogistic rhetoric harking as far back as the official correspondence of the founder himself, Pope Urban IV (reg. 1261–1264); his metrical life, composed in the 1270s; and the late medieval versions of Guillaume de Nangis’ Latin Chronicle. Contemporary art historians have often waxed eloquent about the sheer audacity of the edifice’s skeletal structure, with its spindly supports, dematerialized walls, and unsettlingly insubstantial buttressing; the illusionistic effects playing across and between its carved, molded, and glazed surfaces; and the mesmerizing ethereality of its shrine-like preciousness, offset by bold passages of cerebral sophistication.

As a corollary of such universal acclaim, the designer of Saint-Urbain has been credited with the originality, precocity, and coherence of vision reserved for the select few deemed worthy of induction into the pantheon of the late-thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century Gothic
avant-garde, which, in the view of Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, would have included such mavericks as the master masons responsible for the east end of Saint Augustine’s Abbey, Bristol, and the remodeling of the south transept and choir at Saint Peter’s Abbey, Gloucester. Although recent research has begun to chip away at this glorified image of bona fide artistic genius by positing the involvement of at least one more master mason in the western bays of the nave, scholarly consensus maintains that the original concept for Saint-Urbain lay encoded within the building’s geometry; its completion, even in the event of the departure of the ‘First Master,’ would have been conditioned by the church’s exterior envelope, the largest part of which, including the west front, had been erected (or initiated) prior to any change of guard at the helm of the chantier. In this light, one might construe the original designer of Saint-Urbain as having built ‘against time,’ like an avant la lettre Michelangelo, adopting a construction sequence calibrated in such a way as to safeguard the essence of his design against radical future alterations by equally independent-minded colleagues.

Nevertheless, the valiant efforts made by certain authors to associate the first Saint-Urbain master’s idiosyncratic take on French Rayonnant Gothic with a name drawn from the available documents have proven inconclusive, to say the least, and he remains to us no more than a collection of formal, structural, and spatial traits or choices grouped under a Notname, i.e., a name of convenience or necessity. Time and again, the writing of the biographies of anonymous medieval artists and the synthesis of their oeuvres on the model of those of the Italian Renaissance has turned out to be problematic for a period during which the notion and ‘cult’ of individual genius had yet to be concretely formulated. Long faced

1 Troyes, Saint-Urbain, general view of exterior from the southeast
2 Troyes, Saint-Urbain, general view of interior of main apse, looking east
with dubious fictive artistic personalities, such as the widely itinerant sculptor dubbed the 'Naumburg Master,' medievalists have become wary of the pitfalls of conjuring up temperaments and careers from the surviving works on an essentially connoisseurial basis, without the help of pertinent documentary evidence. In the realm of architecture, Stephen Murray and Nicola Coldstream, among others, have cautioned that changes in the formal repertoire of multi-phase buildings (moldings, tracery, pier sections, capital and base types, etc.) do not necessarily signal a change of master mason, and vice versa, since factors ranging from tradition and guild regulations to patronal preferences and a desire for visual homogeneity could have resulted in the greater or lesser longevity of forms within a given project, irrespective of individual masters' personal proclivities. On the one hand, such methodological caveats should give us due pause when attempting to distinguish the individual contributions of master masons, for whose fragmentary and ill-defined work a true catalogue raisonné could never be compiled; on the other hand, they should not result in inadvertently glossing over subtle yet telling revisions and adjustments in design or detailing revelatory of broader shifts in a building project's overall conception.

The present essay proposes to reexamine the chronology and the development of the formal profile of Saint-Urbain at Troyes in light of the aforementioned current trends in the field of medieval architectural history, casting aside the issue of attribution to particular 'hands.' Departing from a new reading of the architecture of the nave and a more comprehensive consideration of the available archival documentation (much of which remains unpublished), this study will endeavor to suggest an alternative, less clear-cut narrative to that currently favored, the unquestioned premises of which hark back to scholarship of the mid-1950s. Instead of viewing Saint-Urbain as the product of a straightforward evolutionary design process unfolding from Rayonnant to (proto-)Flamboyant forms in the course of a couple or more decades, it will make the case for a non-linear formal progression predicated on the practical realities prevailing at the chantier and the weight of patronal intentions and decisions. By prying open the cracks in the purportedly unitary vision of Saint-Urbain's original designer, the conclusions of this inquiry will have far-reaching implications for our understanding not only of the building's history, but also of the early reception of visual tropes that were to find a more welcoming home in Late Gothic architecture.

The Collegiate Church of Saint-Urbain and Its Patrons: The State of the Question

In a late medieval memorandum addressed to preachers active at the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain at Troyes, a list of all the indulgences from which the faithful stood to benefit by visiting or making donations was prefaced by a potted history of the institution's foundation: the late Pope Urban IV, who had been born in Troyes, decided to build a memorial church on the site of his father's house in honor of God the Father, the Virgin, and Saint Urban, pope and martyr, at his own expense and that of the Roman Church, and to grant it many privileges, relics, and indulgences. Jacques Pantaléon, who had been awarded the titles of master in the liberal arts and canon law from the University of Paris, had served as papal chaplain to Innocent IV and had filled key positions in various cathedrals in France, the Low Countries, and the Holy Roman Empire, before being appointed Latin patriarch of Jerusalem and, eventually, elected to the Apostolic throne. Even though he was not affiliated to the Capetian royal court, like his successors, he surrounded himself with several French cardinals, including his own nephew, and championed the French cause in the 'Sicilian Question' by favor-
ing the annihilation of Hohenstaufen power in Southern Italy and promoting the candidacy for the crown of Sicily of the younger brother of Louis IX, Charles of Anjou. In the ecclesiastical sphere, Urban’s most widely acknowledged achievement was the formal institution in 1264 of the feast of Corpus Christi, commemorating the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the solemn celebration of which took hold throughout Latin Christendom following the publication of the decrees of the Council of Vienne (1312) by Pope John XXII in 1317.\(^1\)

The Saint-Urbain project was inaugurated in the spring of 1262, when Urban IV requested of the Benedictine nuns of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains to sell to his procurators his paternal residence, ceded them in the past for the sake of the souls of his parents and friends, along with other adjacent property, for the site to be used in building the new church.\(^2\) The acquisition of contiguous houses lying between Troyes’ Rue Grande (present-day Rue Georges Clemenceau) and Rue Moyenne (now Rue Urbain IV), immediately to the north of the nunnery, carried on during 1263, when construction must already have been underway. The 10,000 marks sterling that the pope had set aside for Saint-Urbain ensured a speedy pace of work, and by September 1265 Urban’s successor to the throne of Saint Peter, Clement IV (reg. 1265–1268), exempted the foundation from diocesan jurisdiction and defined the optimal composition of the collegiate chapter (twelve canons, along with a dean, chanter, and treasurer), its privileges, and responsibilities. That these provisions probably meant that the Saint-Urbain choir was by then ready to receive its occupants is confirmed by a couple of indulgences for visitors to the church on the day of its (future) dedication and on the feast of Saint Urban, issued later that same year.

However, a series of unforeseeable vicissitudes and financial disasters befall the project thereafter, forestalling progress and jeopardizing its timely completion. A devastating fire swept through the east end of the edifice in the mid-1260s, causing grave damage to its structure, which thus necessitated extensive and costly repairs. Around the same time, the nuns of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains, under the belief that Saint-Urbain was impinging upon their jurisdiction, raided the church with their lay accomplices, smashed the marble mensa of its high altar, removed its doors from their hinges (on two separate occasions), and carried them to their monastery, together with carved stone-work, timber, and various tools and machinery employed in the papal foundation’s construc-

3 Troyes, Saint-Urbain, high altar piscina
tion. These harrowing events, coupled with the embezzlement of the fabric’s funds by a former administrator and the sequestration of property by the count of Champagne, seem to have brought the project to its proverbial knees. It was revived only through the direct involvement of Ancher of Troyes, Cardinal-Priest of Santa Pras-sede and Urban’s nephew, who undertook to rationalize the church’s assets, scout out funding opportunities for the building, and enrich its sacristy with precious liturgical vessels and other gifts. His most significant contribution to the progress of construction at Saint-Urbain is thought to have been the agreement he concluded in 1276 with his “compatriot and friend” Charles I of Anjou, king of Sicily, regarding the procurement of building stone and timber from the lands of Margaret of Burgundy, Charles’ second wife, in Tonnerre. Ancher’s fervent devotion to his uncle’s memory and the architectural
initiative that lay closest to the latter’s heart was immortalized in an inscribed panel hung on one of the church’s piers on the occasion of its dedication in 1389 (and long since lost), as well as in the carved donor portraits of the two Pantaléons holding up representations of the parts of the building for which they had been responsible, arranged on either side of a Coronation of the Virgin in the high altar piscina (fig. 3).13

In its present state, the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain at Troyes constitutes a three-aisled rib-vaulted basilica of relatively modest dimensions (fig. 4). Despite the mannered effects of complex surface layering articulating its exterior, the building’s basic overall massing is almost deceptively simple: the aisles terminate towards the east in three five-sided apses, of which that capping the central vessel is broader, larger, and protruding eastwards; the transept, readily conspicuous in the interior, is contained within the exterior walls of the north and south aisles, except for the elaborately detailed buttressed porches growing out of its north and south fronts; and the west façade plays host to three portals, one to each aisle, fronted by shallow porches. The short, three-bay nave and the remarkable uniformity observed at clerestory level, where a wreath of generous traceried and gabled windows stretches from one end of the edifice to the other, may have been meant to foster the impression of this being a centrally planned structure, perhaps a kind of martyrrium to Saint Urban and a monumental shrine to the Corpus Christi – an impression, moreover, that would have been reinforced by the erstwhile presence of a timber spire over the crossing (the last iteration of this feature was destroyed by lightning in 1761). However, this ambitious architectural vision remained unconsummated during the Middle Ages, as the nave clerestory and the upper parts of the west front were not completed until the launch of a concentrated building campaign under the architect Paul Selmersheim between 1890 and 1905. In fact, modern intervention went much further than that, as the thoroughgoing yet respectful restorations undertaken at the site from the 1840s seem to have left little untouched, including the south transept porch, the sacristy, treasury, and the elegantly fashioned main apse that so impressed Mayor Henry, all of which were almost entirely rebuilt, with a lot of new material, on the medieval model.14

The varied and competing chronologies of the medieval parts of the church hitherto proposed have essentially hinged on scholarly interpretation of the design of the supports in the north and south transept porches, as well as that of the piers and responds in the two westernmost bays of the nave. In the transept porches, the vault ribs, transverse, and external front arches do not spring from capitals, but visually penetrate into the body of the three cylindrical piers rising in front of each façade’s twin portals, manifesting in their section as fillets, shallow hollows, and
filleted rolls descending all the way to the bases (fig. 5). Furthermore, the responds and piers in the nave’s west end represented a radical transformation of the designs employed in the chevet, transept, and easternmost nave bay: the vigorous Rayonnant compound responds and piers, made up of well-defined shafts bundled around a clearly discernible core, had given way to gelatinous-looking masses, on the prismatic surfaces of which the profiles of the formerets, vault ribs, and transverse arches registered as barely protruding sections of rolls and fillets (fig. 6). Here, as in the transept porches, the articulating elements of the vaulting ‘die’ into the supports without the mediation of capitals.

In his *Dictionnaire*, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc made sense of these forms within the context of what he thought to be a regular and, presumably, uneventful building chronology by attributing them to the innovative disposition of the late-thirteenth-century ‘Champe-nois School,’ which he placed at the vanguard of French Gothic design. Conversely, Francis Salet, in a highly influential article published in 1955, did not share the rationalist architect-restorer’s views about the bravura precocity of forms that appeared to herald the advent of the Flamboyant style (ca. 1380 – ca. 1550). Even though he did not comment on the supports of the transept porches, he considered the form of the responds...
and piers of the two westernmost bays in both nave side aisles to be so incongruous with the visual vocabulary established in the rest of the building as to be late medieval additions, installed, together with the dependent vaulting, a little before the church’s consecration in 1389. Since he believed that the exterior walls of the nave aisles and the lower part of the west front dated from the latter half of the thirteenth century, Salet postulated a clear formal and chronological dichotomy between exterior and interior at this end of the structure, which has colored virtually all subsequent accounts of Saint-Urbain’s architecture (fig. 7a).

Michael Davis’ 1984 article on the “second campaign of construction” at Saint-Urbain examined closely the minutiae of the church’s creation by expertly combining source criticism with an attentive look at the building’s masonry and morphology. According to his conception of the chronology (fig. 7b), the entirety of the chevet, the ground story of the transept (excluding the porches), the easternmost bay of the nave aisles, and the lower part of the west front were the work of the master mason hired by Urban IV in ca. 1262, who must have left the project following the conflagration that incinerated the east end. After a hasty bout of repairs to the most seriously affected parts of the structure, the touch of a new master began to be felt in the completion of the upper story of the transept and its porches, in the construction of the two remaining bays of the nave aisles, and in the carrying on of work on the west façade. Far from the virtuosic and eccentric style of the ‘First Master,’ the forms appearing in this second campaign were on the whole simpler and more conservative variations on the themes established in the building’s earlier parts. The ‘dying moldings’ in the transept porch piers, together with their counterparts at the west end of the nave, the latter paired with wall responds and piers of prismatic angularity, were all seen as symptoms of the severe funds shortage that plagued the fabric of Saint-Urbain in the final decades of the thirteenth century. After all, according to Davis, the thrust of the documentary evidence seemed to preclude building of any magnitude at the site after the death of the collegiate foundation’s great patron, Cardinal Ancher, in 1286. By introducing to the story the two charters issued by Charles of Anjou in 1276 in favor of the continuation of the works at
Saint-Urbain, Caroline Bruzelius strengthened some of Davis’ findings and brought them into sharper focus. She achieved this by arguing that the aforementioned texts dated more precisely the inauguration of the second campaign to the 1270s and located it at the roof of the transept.\textsuperscript{18}

Later research accepted and adopted most of Davis’ and Bruzelius’ conclusions, with the notable exception of the 1280s as the terminal date for the medieval fabric of the nave. In his magisterial study of Southern French cathedral architecture, Christian Freigang took issue with the financial arguments proffered to explain the ‘proto-Flamboyant’ forms in the two westernmost bays of the nave, noting the apparently illogical disparity between costly exterior and poverty-stricken interior; to his mind, the Rayonnant-style repertoire of the window tracery and assorted exterior ornament in these bays could have been the outcome of a conscious late-fourteenth-century striving for conformity with the earlier parts of the building.\textsuperscript{19} Christine Onnen’s doctoral dissertation, published in 2004, weighed in on the question by adducing archival evidence attesting to the nave being in use by 1355 for the performance of the \textit{Salve Regina}; from this, she concluded that the western bays of the nave aisles would have been finished in the mid-fourteenth century (fig. 7c).\textsuperscript{20} More recently, Yves Gallet, taking his cue from both Freigang and Onnen, likewise chose to dissociate the erection of the two westernmost bays of the nave aisles from that of the transept porches, proposing a date in ca. 1300–1320, largely on account of textual testimony and the style of both the architecture and the stained glass in this part of the church.\textsuperscript{21}

From the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that no agreement has thus far been reached regarding the intractable issue of pinpointing the likely moment in which the transition from Rayonnant to Flamboyant-like forms occurred in the nave of Saint-Urbain. I believe that the true problem here is one of method. In what follows, I shall try to momentarily disregard questions of architectural style and its anticipated evolutionary patterns as I explore other research avenues and different angles from which to approach the question. Using Davis’ chronology – still widely held to be the most authoritative – as a springboard, I will begin broaching the topic via closer scrutiny of a fundamental aspect of his thesis that has yet to provoke any reactionary comment, namely the date of the transept.

\textbf{Ante or post combustionem? Reassessing the Date of the Transept}

The current hypothesis that the lower part of the transept was already in existence by the mid-1260s, while the upper story was only added by Saint-Urbain’s ‘Second Master’ in the 1270s, is founded on two major pieces of evidence and a series of contingent assumptions. The documentation detailing the depredations wrought in 1266 on the papal collegiate church by the irate nuns of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains and their henchmen mentions that the building’s doors were wrenched out of their frame, subsequently replaced by the canons, and then broken again by the nunnery’s unholy cabal; since, at that point in time, the west end of the nave was far from complete, it has rightly been argued that the doors in question would have been those of the transept façades. This admission would, in turn, imply that the lower part of the transepts had already been in place in time for the ruckus.\textsuperscript{22} The second important chronological pointer comes in the form of Selmersheim’s report of the restoration of the building’s east end, submitted in early 1882. According to this document, a substantial part of the fabric had to be heavily restored or even reconstructed due to the extensive damage caused by fire on its masonry; contrariwise, the transept and nave showed no sign of the fire and, as the foundations appeared to have been more sound here and the degree of deterioration less pronounced, the restoration
was expected to be less invasive. The traces of fire damage uncovered by the restoration crew were immediately linked to a fabric account of ca. 1263–1266, which records expenses incurred both “before” and “after the fire.” Therefore, if the transept survived the conflagration unscathed, then it must have largely postdated the sinistre of ca. 1265; from here, it is only a small step to assuming that its upper story (and roof) would have been completed during the campaign of works initiated under Cardinal Ancher in the 1270s.

A hitherto unnoticed letter addressed by Selmersheim to the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts on 16 July 1890 contained a brief report of the restoration work carried out to that date and a thoroughly revised estimation of the urgency of further interventions, when compared to his report from 1882. While the choir and east wall of the transept had been sufficiently repaired and consolidated, the rest of the transept and the nave were in an appalling state of preservation and thus required immediate care. As far as the transept was concerned, the roof, gables, window tracery and glass, porches, and sculpture were found to be in a precarious condition. Whereas, according to the restorer, it had suffered less than the choir from the incendiary escapades of the nuns of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains, the transept nonetheless bore numerous traces of the fire and its upper parts were in a deplorable state due to long neglect. What may be deduced from Selmersheim’s later report, which represented a reevaluation of the condition of the masonry in the transept stemming from closer inspection, is that this area of the church, including its upper story, had also been compromised by the fire of the mid-1260s, and would therefore seem to predate it. There exists some medieval corroborative evidence. By 1264, canonries in the college of Saint-Urbain were being assigned by Urban IV to individuals in his circle of close associates, and in 1265 Clement IV helped materialize his predecessor’s intention to formally establish the chapter and the rules governing its function. Around the same time, the roof of the east end was being leaded and the choir stalls installed, the dedication of the high altar was considered imminent, and indulgences for visitors were issued. Opening the church to the faithful would suggest that, by 1265, a space beyond the choir would have been made available to receive them; since the choir screen (jubé) stretched between the eastern crossing piers and the nave had only just been begun, the only plausible venue devoted to regular lay access would be the transept. This hypothesis to some degree is confirmed by a slightly later incident: in 1268, that bane of Saint-Urbain’s existence, the sisters of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains, and their armed minions prevented the archbishop of Tyre, who was acting on papal orders to consecrate the church’s cemetery, from opening the door and entering the building. Given that, again, one of the transept doorways must surely have been meant, this course of action implies that the interior space between the transept façades and the choir would have been accessible and, in all probability, unencumbered by the inconveniences of a site under construction.

The arguments presented above suggest the plausible revision of the completion date of the transept at the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain at Troyes to before the fire of the mid-1260s. This seemingly minor adjustment to the building’s chronology is not without appreciable consequences for the bigger picture, particularly with respect to issues of patronage and authorship. The microarchitectural avatar held up by the figure of Ancher Pantaléon in the high altar piscina need no longer be thought to represent the church’s transept, since the cardinal did not assume the project’s reins until well after his uncle’s demise (fig. 8). Yet it should be acknowledged that no compelling reason existed for such a surmise in the first place, as miniaturized donors’ models like the one in question typically only exhibited a passing resemblance to the ed-
fices they were meant to represent; given that, as we shall see in more detail presently, the high altar piscina was designed in the 1270s, Ancher’s offering could well synecdochically summarize the general visual impression made by the Rayonnant stylistic vocabulary employed in current and planned future work in the nave. What is more, the widely held thesis that the “three vaults of the church” that were to be roofed after 1276 by virtue of Charles I of Anjou’s grant of timber from forests in Tonnerre were those of the transept and crossing may also need to be re-examined. The pertinent charter’s vague wording seems to refer to the roofing of three identical or similar vaults, which would exclude the crossing, had it been planned to accommodate a spire from inception, as is very likely the case; alternatively, and given that construction of the nave clerestory lay well into the future, the three vaults alluded to here could be located elsewhere, for example in the nave aisles. More importantly, perhaps, the stylistic change observed by Davis in the transept’s upper story, which, inter alia, led him to assign its design to his second master mason, does not appear to coincide with the dramatic events of the mid-1260s and any abrupt break in construction. The transition from foliate-lined roundels in the spandrels of the chevet clerestory bays to more conventional inscribed quatrefoils in the transept, and from crocketed to unadorned gables, together with further alterations in the tracery designs, proportions, and ornamental complexity of certain elements from one part of the building to the next, occurred gradually and relatively unobtrusively – to the point, in fact, that Davis himself could not decide whether the east walls of the transept belonged to the first or second campaign. Nevertheless, for all the modifications and simplifications (e.g., in the moldings of the crossing arches), the architecture of the transept upper story discloses none of the disconcerting elisions that were to become the hallmark of the transept porches and, especially, the western bays of the nave.

Rayonnant or Flamboyant?
Reconsidering the Date of the West End of the Nave

In their main lines, the medieval parts of the nave exhibit some uniformity from one end to the other, as well as an almost unswerving conformity to what had already been built at that time further east. The easternmost bays of both north and south nave aisles, which are thought to have been executed in the 1260s, more specifically after the east end and before the upper story of the transept, essentially constitute mirror images of their counterparts on the transept’s other side (fig. 9). There, as here, the need to buttress the non-protruding terminal wall of the transept elicited the vertical division of the wall into two narrow sub-bays, the one closest to the transept being solid and blind, the other pierced by a narrow window filled with tracery in two super-
imposed layers of widely divergent design. This concession to structural exigency was somewhat alleviated on the interior by the treatment of the upper half of the sub-bays adjoining the transept as *faux* windows, complete with blind tracery patterned after that of the interior layer in the glazed windows of the adjacent sub-bays. Gothic visual logic dictated that the svelte responds employed to effect the division into sub-bays should be seen to contribute to the carrying of the vaulting, hence the quinquepartite rib vaults that, having drawn inspiration from an analogous solution in the early-thirteenth-century chevet of nearby Troyes Cathedral, became such a distinctive leitmotiv of interior surface articulation at Saint-Urbain. As has long been observed, a number of more or less subtle design revisions was introduced in the middle bays of the north and south nave aisles, which were revelatory of a decisive shift in aesthetic outlook (fig. 10). The basic overall format of these bays remained the same as that of their counterparts further east, since the synergy of twin sub-bays (one glazed, one blind) and five-part vaults was required in this...
instance to reinforce the ground-story walls of
the projected towers over the bays directly to the
west. What changed concerned mostly the level
of lavishness and detail with which the structure
was endowed, in a manner consistent with pro-
gressive modifications in its earlier parts. To be
more precise, both glazed and dummy windows
in these bays lost their inner tracery layer; and
the middle and western wall responds devolved
into a play of prismatic surfaces and shed such
cosmetic frivolities as capitals or molded plinths,
thus experiencing a formal reduction similar to
that of the corresponding freestanding nave ar-
cade piers (fig. 6). Further alterations reflect de-
sign choices made in other parts of the building
since the construction of the easternmost nave
aisle bays: the predilection for inscribed foiled
shapes and crocketless gables in the window
tracery may be paralleled in the transept’s upper
story and porches, while the preference for volu-
minous filleted rolls as the axial feature of vault
ribs and transverse arches was first unambigu-
ously declared in the high vaults of the choir and
transept. The fastidious micromanagement of
architectural detailing in these bays is nowhere
more evident than in the profile of the string-
course running below the windows, which was given a near-inconspicuous makeover.

The westernmost bays of the nave, both north and south, were destined to carry the towers of the west front, and their layout was configured accordingly: contrary to the bays further east, they each constitute a single, undivided unit covered by a quadripartite rib vault and furnished with a tracery window in the center of their north or south walls, respectively (fig. 11). Whether this was the original plan is certainly debatable, as the presence next to the south bay’s eastern wall respond, right above the string-course, of a base and plinth for a stepped arched frame presumably identical to that of the blind sub-bay on the respond’s other side might imply that this space was initially meant to also be bisected into two sub-bays. However, it cannot be excluded that the first respond drum above the stringcourse could have been made symmetrical by miscommunication rather than by design, given that the ‘error’ was immediately corrected in the drum above and the useless plinth buried within the thickness of the surrounding masonry; after all, no sign of such a pentimento is to be seen in the corresponding location in the

11 Troyes, Saint-Urbain, nave, interior view of south wall of westernmost south aisle bay; the inset shows possible pentimento in construction
westernmost nave aisle bay on the north side. At any rate, misstep or not, this detail serves to confirm the progress of construction from east to west, also compounded by the aspect of the wall responds, moldings, and window tracery in these westernmost aisle bays, which differs little from that of the middle bays directly to the east.

Ever since Salet’s pioneering study of Saint-Urbain’s architecture, the wall responds in the northwest and southwest angles of the nave, together with those at the western extremity of the main arcades, have been considered to date from a later period than the lower part of the west front. The justification habitually cited in support of this contention is purely stylistic – namely, that the visual repertoire of the Rayonnant façade on the exterior clashed violently with the (proto-)Flamboyant forms of the responds in the interior. To this day, no discussion of the church has broached the rationale for building the west front without provision for responds on its interior face, calibrated to carry the vaulting and the main arcade arches, nor has it tackled the reasons for a hypothetical substitution of earlier by later responds in a different style. The weakness of the current narrative is amply demonstrated in the various attempts made to illustrate the chronology of the nave’s west end, no two of which agree on the exact limits of the later intervention on the interior of the west façade (figs. 7a – c). In fact, a closer look at the stonework of the verso of the west front reveals no unequivocal sutures around the north-west/southwest angle responds and their main arcade counterparts, while a couple of more targeted arguments will suffice to show that both sides of the façade at this end of the edifice were entirely coeval. First, the drums from which the responds lodged in the nave’s northwest and southwest angles were assembled were carved from the same blocks of stone as the adjacent jamb of the doorways giving access to the staircase turrets at either end of the west front (fig. 12). This practically means that the lintels of these doorways and all of the masonry placed on top of them could not have been put in place in the absence of the aforementioned responds. Second,
the stringcourse that we have encountered running below the windows in the interior of the side aisles continues onto the west front, where it is only interrupted by the wall responds and the portal openings. The stringcourse’s profile is that established at the design revisions in the middle nave aisle bays, which also gave birth to the prismatic forms of the wall responds in the church’s west end. That the stringcourse could not have been inserted ex post facto into an earlier façade wall becomes obvious when one examines the intrados of the portal embrasures to find that the large horizontal stone blocks on which this decorative feature was carved penetrate too deep into the thickness of the wall to have been an afterthought (fig. 13). These considerations, coupled with the inherent unlikelihood of the conception of a new Gothic façade exterior independently of its interior, militate for the absolute contemporaneity of all parts of the west front, including its interior stringcourse and wall responds, regardless of any alleged stylistic disjunctions between exterior and interior. In other words, the medieval fabric of the nave of Saint-Urbain at Troyes seems to have been erected in a relatively straightforward manner from east to west,
namely in a construction sequence of which the westernmost aisle bays, together with what was ultimately built of the Rayonnant-style façade, proved to be the very last stage.

Before discussing in any detail the formal profile of the west front exterior and how it may be reconciled with the nave chronology as elaborated above, it would be expedient to revisit the issue of the date of Saint-Urbain’s west end by exploiting hitherto untapped evidence, gleaned from the foundation’s copious unpublished archival resources. One avenue by which to approach the question is to consider the relationship of uneasy coexistence between the majestic architecture of the church and the modest residences that once lined its long sides (fig. 14). Squeezed tightly between the walls of the aisles, in both chevet and nave, and the two parallel streets cordonning off Saint-Urbain to the north and south, namely the Rue Grande and the Rue Moyenne, these houses were a necessary evil, as their renting out by the chapter to private individuals generated much-needed revenue while also creating a host of irritatingly persistent problems. Entries from the early modern period in the chapter deliberation registers record the chapter’s anxiety over the safety hazards posed by residents using the spaces between the buttresses for the storage of flammable and other materials; the damage to the church’s masonry caused by unauthorized alterations and additions to the residences’ basic layout; the difficult negotiations between chapter and tenants concerning the need of the former to lead processions through the latter’s backyards; and the pressing complaints of boarders whose quality of life was compromised by their houses’ propinquity to the church’s exterior walls.37 Condemned as a parasitic eyesore in the nineteenth century, these houses were expropriated and torn down between 1839 and 1876 to allow clearer and more dignified views of the church, depriving today’s

15 Paul Selmersheim, Plan of buildings around Saint-Urbain, 1875. Paris, MPP, 0082/010/2012, (10)300
architectural historians of the opportunity to study their physical fabric and symbiotic bond with Saint-Urbain. This setback notwithstanding, documentary evidence for the existence of some of these residences already by the middle of the fourteenth century may furnish firm clues towards a plausible *terminus ante quem* for construction work in the nave. The three contiguous tenements lodged between the south transept porch and the west front in both Bocher de Coluel's and Selmersheim's plans of Saint-Urbain and its surroundings (dating from 1769 and the 1870s and 1880s, respectively) may be identified with the three houses attached to the wall of the church on the side of the Rue Moyenne, which were held by Pierre Garnier des Moulins, cleric and citizen of Troyes, and his wife, Julienne de Verdun, in the 1350s (figs. 14–15); around the same time, this same couple busied themselves with founding the *Salve Regina* and the altar of the Annunciation at the church. Therefore, it stands to reason that the exterior wall of the nave south aisle would have been complete by that date and, by association, the same would be true of its northern counterpart. What is more, to judge by the narrowness of the terrain on the north and south sides of Saint-Urbain and the incommodious proximity of the houses to the walls of the church that engendered so many problems, the canons can hardly be thought to have allowed the infestation of the space around their edifice with subsidiary structures before the occurrence of a prolonged caesura in construction.

Further insight into the building chronology of the Saint-Urbain nave can be gained by embarking on reconstructing the edifice's sacred topography, since the location of altars and chapels may divulge suggestive hints as to which parts of the building were structurally complete and in religious use at any given point in time. The earliest surviving plan of the collegiate church, Coluel's eighteenth-century monumental topographical plan of the city of Troyes, shows the high altar in the chevet's main apse and four additional altars in the lateral apses and against the western side of the choir screen (fig. 14). Nevertheless, modern descriptions of the church alert the historian to the existence of yet more altars in the nave, set against the walls of the aisles and the main arcade piers. Despite frequent references to them in written sources, their exact placement was not recorded in any visual medium before they were excised from the nave aisles in 1756–1757 and their chaplaincies suppressed so that their goods, rights, and revenues could be transferred to the financially struggling fabric in 1784, only a few short years prior to the upheavals of the Revolution. Although, admittedly, the extant documentation is all too often exiguous, fragmentary, and imprecise, enough may be teased out of the collegiate foundation's fabric accounts, chapter deliberation registers, testamentary deeds, and other archival material for a partial, tentative reinstatement of the nave's primary liturgical, commemorative, and devotional foci.

At the dedication ceremony of the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain on 11 July 1389, nine altars were consecrated by Pierre d’Arcis, bishop of Troyes, including the high altar. The *tituli* and chaplaincies of the altars in the chapels on either side of the choir, that is, in the apses of the east end side aisles, are well known: the north chapel altar, dedicated to Saint Nicholas, was home to the chaplaincies of the Holy Cross, Saint Margaret, and Saint Luke, while its southern counterpart, dedicated to the Virgin, accommodated the chaplaincy of Saint Anne. The choir screen sheltered two altars both before and after its renovation in the 1740s, that of the Fours Saints (Lawrence, Maurus, Sulpicius, and Anthony) to the north of its central doorway, and that of the Annunciation in a symmetrical position to the south. With these five altars accounted for, the remaining four pre-1389 altars should be sought in the nave, although pinpointing their exact location is hampered by the interplay of too many
variables. To begin with, it is simply not known which bays and piers harbored altars before the mid-eighteenth century. What is more, the terminology employed in the relevant texts to denote endowed memorial foundations typically does not differentiate between altars, chapels, or chaplaincies and, therefore, between the physical objects or spaces and the services performed on or in them. As a result, six foundations (those of Saints John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Leonard, Mary Magdalene, Peter and Paul, and All Hallows), if not more (it is not known, for instance, whether that of Saint Stephen, first recorded a mere decade after 1389, could have been in existence before that date), need to be matched to only four stone-and-mortar altars, meaning that some of the latter definitely served more than one chaplaincy, though it is now almost impossible to know which.\textsuperscript{46} Regardless of these vexing uncertainties, a preliminary mapping of the available textual data on the architecture of the building will enable a secure localization of a few of the nave altars, leading on to safer conclusions about the date of this part of the edifice (fig. 4).

The best documented of all the nave altars is certainly that of Saint John the Baptist. Founded by Adam de Sarrey, dean of Saint-Urbain (fl. 1277–1283, deceased by 1289), it stood below the window in the easternmost bay of the south aisle.\textsuperscript{47} Documentary evidence for sixteenth-century repair work places the altar of Saint Gerald and the baptismal font further to the west, namely in the middle and westernmost south aisle bays.\textsuperscript{48} In his will of 1382, Pierre Bierne, beneficed at the altar of Saint Nicholas in the church of Saint-Urbain, stipulated that he wished to be buried between the last and second-to-last pier of the nave, on the side of the altar of Saint Mary Magdalene; this topographical information would identify the westernmost bay in either the north or the south aisle as the site of the altar dedicated to the Apostle of the Apostles, founded in 1328 by Pierre de la Noé.\textsuperscript{49} Since no altar is ever sited in the same bay as the baptismal font, it is highly likely that the Magdalene altar lay at the western end of the north aisle. Moreover, a note in an inventory of Saint-Urbain’s property titles and related archival materials, drawn up at the very end of the fourteenth century, indicates that the chaplaincy of All Hallows had also been established on the same altar some time before 1363.\textsuperscript{50} Corroborating evidence comes in the form of a couple of entries in the fabric accounts from the 1400s, which intimate the close spatial proximity between the All Hallows altar and one of the church’s four staircase turrets, in this instance obviously the one in the northwest angle.\textsuperscript{51} Anchoring this last dedication in space facilitates the localization of yet another altar, that of Saint John the Evangelist, founded in 1299 by Adeline, sister of the treasurer of Saint-Urbain.\textsuperscript{52} According to the Liber distributionum of 1711, the two altars stood close together, although it is not specified whether that of Saint John would have been in the neighboring middle bay of the north aisle or against the westernmost freestanding pier of the north nave arcade, at the juncture between the two bays.\textsuperscript{53} At any rate, the first option appears likelier, if one attributes to lack of space or obstruction of movement the desire of the confraternity of painters, expressed in 1614, to move its annual service from its time-honored venue in the chapel of Saint John the Evangelist to the altar of Saints Peter and Paul, which seems to have been erected against one of the nave piers.\textsuperscript{14}

The foregoing detailed excursus on the history of the late medieval rental housing pressed against the walls of the nave at the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain at Troyes and the partial reconstruction of its Eucharistic topography arm the architectural historian with fresh evidence with which to reassess the controversial issue of the nave’s chronology. That three contiguous houses had sprouted in direct contact with the south nave wall by the 1350s implies that this structure, with its accompanying interior responds, stringcourse, and other detailing, could
not have been conceived and executed after that date. Furthermore, the installation of the altar of the Magdalene in the westernmost bay of the north aisle posits 1328 as a solid *terminus ante quem* for the latter’s completion up to and including the vaulting; this, in turn, would signify that the long walls of the nave, both the north and south ends of the west front up to the aisle vaults, and the westernmost freestanding main arcade piers were put up by the first third of the fourteenth century. More importantly, the establishment of the altar of Saint John the Evangelist, locked into place in the north aisle’s middle bay, makes a compellingly strong case for backdating the emergence of the so-called ‘proto-Flamboyant’ stylistic features of the Saint-Urbain west end to before ca. 1300. Consequently, if the dating of the stained glass in the aisle windows to ca. 1300–1320 is accurate, one may assume that it would have been installed in one concerted campaign following the structural completion of all three bays of the aisles and, possibly, the assembly of the temporary timber roof over the nave that ultimately marked the end of the medieval phase of building.\(^{55}\) Such a scenario essentially confirms Davis’ early-date hypothesis in the face of both earlier and later scholarly affirmations in favor of a more protracted chronology eventually acquiring a late medieval flavor. Nevertheless, it does not, by itself, shed light on how (and why) two stylistic modes as conspicuously at odds with each other as those on the exterior and the interior of the west front could have been the fruit of a single period and creative intellect.

**Unitary Concept or Prey to Fortune?**
**Revisiting the Design of the West Front**

Current scholarship on the west façade of the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain holds that it had originally been devised as a twin-towered front with three portals inserted in generous expanses of walling within individual porches, divided from each other by solid buttresses and dissimulated behind a screen of fragile-looking arcading in the manner of the mid-thirteenth-century façade at Saint-Nicaise, Reims (fig. 16).\(^{56}\) Both the central and lateral portals seem to share formal similarities with their transept front counterparts, and the geometry of the plan of the three western porches was found to be compatible with that of the east end, transept fronts, and the rest of the building. The only notable deviations from the original conception thus far noted are concentrated in the upper half of the portal zone, where the vault ribs of the lateral porches jarringly changed direction mid-course to conform to a downsizing of the earlier project: instead of setting up three arches, carried by two columns, in front of each porch, the revised scheme foresaw the construction of a single arch, along the lines of the present instantiation dating from around 1900. Since this simplification was considered the outcome of the *chantier’s* impecuniosity in its later years, the ‘Second Mas-
’ was inculpated for implementing it, thus upholding the impression that the uncompromised lower part of the west façade wall was the pristine brainchild of the initial concepteur. Nevertheless, appearances can be deceiving, a dictum that rings especially relevant in the light of the construction sequence established in the previous section, according to which the erection of the west front and the vaults of the adjacent aisle bays represented the last masonry building work undertaken at the site during the Middle Ages.

While the basic overall layout of Gothic naves was locked down, at least in theory, as soon as a single bay had been completed, façades were likely to undergo several redesigns up to the moment (often late in the building campaign) when they emerged above the foundations. At Saint-Urbain, among the frequent irregularities in the ashlar coursing on the exterior, Davis was able to locate masonry breaks in the lower part of the wall between the buttresses in the northwest and southwest angles, which he related to a slight change of profile in the weather molding girding the entire north, south, and east sides of the church just below window level. Even though, as we have seen, sutures in those places need not signal the stitching together of separate construction phases (no clear sign of such seams exists in the interior), the alteration of the weather molding’s form is undeniable, and may be linked to a desire to maintain visual unity between different parts of the church (fig. 17). The molding’s height is visibly and abruptly reduced in the stretch extending along the north side of the west front’s northernmost buttress and the south side of its southern pendant to terminate in a luxurious foliate boss at the angle. Another verdure-encrusted boss set a little lower down on the same angles marks the extreme ends of another weather molding, of the same approximate height as the first (in its reduced version) but a different profile, which runs across the west front portal zone. That the aforementioned bosses were meant to visually and functionally double as shaft-rings for en délit angle shafts implies that this somewhat awkward arrangement is primarily conceivable as a measure to subdue the aesthetic impact of the sudden change of level at which the molding was meant to run on the west façade compared to the rest of the edifice. Since one may reasonably assume that, in a truly cohesive and unitary design, the weather molding made to run at a uniform level around both east end and nave walls would also have continued in the same vein across the west front, the readjustment of the molding’s level (and profile) must be connected to an at least partial reconceptualization of the façade’s proportional scheme. To put it bluntly, the lower parts of the west front, as built, may not precisely correspond to the initial designer’s original vision.

This statement may at first appear to contradict the obvious resemblance of some of the west front’s constituent elements to those in the
18a–b Troyes, Saint-Urbain, views of north and south transept façades

19a–b Troyes, Saint-Urbain, west façade, details of central and south portals
church’s transept façades, datable to the first half of the 1260s (figs. 18–19). To wit, the extensive use of *en délit* shafting on the buttress angles may best be paralleled in the shafts carrying the transept porch and transverse arches on the side of the portal zones; furthermore, the lateral west front portals, with their lean silhouettes, sparsely profiled embrasures, attenuated framing shafts, and tall, glazed, and traceried tympana betray their close kinship with the twin doorways in each

20 Troyes, Saint-Urbain, portal pedestals and corresponding microarchitectural pinnacles in the north transept portal, south transept portal (middle pedestals), and west façade central portal
transept terminal wall; and, most conspicuously, the tall and slender pedestals for large-scale sculpture on either side and against the trumeau of the west front central portal seem to replicate their transept portal counterparts almost down to their smallest details. Yet, in spite of all these concordances, it remains difficult to accept these three façades as products of the same creative vision. The tight, playfully rational, and vigorously sculptural scheme of the transept portal zones was diluted on the west front by the introduction of considerable expanses of plain walling, which flattened the dynamically undulating impression made by the obliquely set niche work in the originals. Even if one accounts for the absence of the triple arcades once intended to screen the west front’s lateral porches, creating a subtle layering effect, the narrow portals with tall glazed tympana, conceived to fit in pairs in the constricted surfaces of the transept façades, look distinctly out of place in their broader polygonal surroundings. Moreover, a closer look at the central portal carved pedestals reveals that, although their overall layout and relief ornament stand in very close comparison to the examples from the transept façades, there are also differences: for instance, the lower end of the pinnacles framing the cusped and gabled arches on each facet of the west front pedestals (except the one on the trumeau) adopts the rounded section of the underlying shaft, while their equivalent in the transept pedestals sports a rectangular section; what is more, the microtracery gracing the upper parts of these pinnacles in the west front follows more elaborate patterns than the simple cusped lancet seen in the original transept pinnacles (fig. 20). More importantly, the section profile of the clustered shafts on the angles of the west front pedestals, while taking over the molding formations of their transept counterparts – a combination of filleted rolls divided by hollows – deviates from the latter in the proportions allotted each individual element (fig. 21). The west front profile is significantly more compact in its design than that of the transepts, implying that different templates would have been used for sections of comparable dimensions. Given the meticulous attention to detail lavished on reproducing the transept pedestals as close to verbatim as possible, the aforementioned deviation, almost invisible to the eye, might mean that whoever designed the west front pedestals either
opted for the less economical route of producing new, custom-made templates with a view to refining visual effects or did not have easy access to the ones employed in the transept façades.  

In the interest of better comprehending the design choices made in the conception of the Saint-Urbain west front, the microarchitectural pinnacles of the central portal pedestals deserve further attention. Each facet of the pinnacles in the trumeau and right embrasure pedestals is carved with one of a small variety of delicately rendered doublet-and-oculus motifs, none of which is paralleled in the single cusped lancets adorning the majority of the pedestal pinnacles in the two transept façades, as stated above. The only exceptions are the pinnacles of the two pedestals at the left and right ends of the south transept façade portal zone, which present microtracery of analogous complexity, if not exactly the same style (figs. 20, 22). Nevertheless, it can be ascertained that the carving of these pedestals’ crowning blocks, bearing the cusped and gabled heads of the arches adorning each visible side, was not coeval with the surrounding architecture. A first hint in this direction is afforded by the adornment of the spandrels above the arch heads with a semé of fleurs-de-lys sans nombre, unique to these two pedestals, instead of the foliage or figural representations seen elsewhere. This projection of the royal heraldic de-
vice, probably as a potent reminder of the French sovereign’s absentee authority, would only make sense in the wake of the marriage and accession to the throne of Philip the Fair and Jeanne de Navarre in 1284–1285, when the Capetians came into the county of Champagne and eventually took over the counts’ established right of appointing half the members of the Saint-Urbain chapter. The style of these pedestal heads seems to corroborate this view, as the one on the right had been considered by Camille Enlart as a fourteenth-century addition to the completed thirteenth-century façade. Conversely, the prominent ogee of the arch heads on the left pedestal, coupled with the flowing contours of its pinnacle microtracery and the type of foliage lining its...
gables, are clear hallmarks of the Flamboyant style. Since the substitution en sous-œuvre of the stone blocks on which these pedestal heads were carved would have required considerable effort and expense, entailing the concurrent removal of the dependent en délité elements which had been sealed in place with lead, any repairs would more than likely be in the form of small-scale interventions, such as the insertion of a new gable tip on the right pedestal’s southern face some time in the Flamboyant period. Consequently, the pedestal heads in question must have been inserted unfinished in the masonry of the south transept portal zone, to be completed après la pose, whenever convenient and affordable. In the context of the present analysis of the church’s west front, the formal similarities between the pedestal sculpture of its central portal and the right pedestal head in the south transept façade would likely posit a date for the former well after the 1260s.

The upper part of the west front portal zone, to the extent that it was built during the Middle Ages, presents a more complex story, involving successive design revisions and creative decisions made under time and financial duress. While the wrenching change of direction of the vault ribs in the lateral portals, presumably responding to a simplification of the porches’ projected form, has been repeatedly noted by both architects and historians, relatively little has been written about the flagrant traces of pragmatic compromise and the ongoing readjustment of the original project in the area of the central portal. The shallow ledges atop the socles extending between the buttresses and the carved pedestals in the flat embrasures on either side of this portal were undoubtedly made to carry large statues, on the model of Saint-Nicaise, Reims. At Saint-Urbain, these figures would have been installed within microarchitectural frames, which were never fully realized. The series of five conjoined rib-vaulted canopies hovering above either embrasure’s socle ledge, at the height of the springing of the central porch vaults, was initially meant to be carried by responds immured in the back wall and lanky freestanding supports. Hard evidence for this intended disposition comes in the form of the bases of the wall responds, still in place atop the socle ledges, and the flat, uncarved underside of the corresponding canopy-vault springings (figs. 23a – b). Furthermore, the spacing of the bases relative to the canopies and the alternation between uncarved springing undersides (which would have been concealed by the underlying shafts or their capitals) and carved ones (whose rosettes were made to be visible) demonstrate that what was originally envisioned in each embrasure was the inclusion of two adjacent twin-canopy units of rectangular plan, probably destined to accommodate two figures each, and a single-canopy unit of polygonal plan closer to the portal and above the carved pedestal. In each of the twin-canopy units, only the four outer angles were conceived to spring from wall responds and freestanding supports, whereas the springings between the two canopies would have been left visually unsupported, as if suspended in mid-air, an elegant concept aptly visualized in the slightly fanciful drawn reconstructions of Fichot and Selmersheim.

On a closer look, while the arched faces of the canopies on the right embrasure were all once furnished with simple cusped-arch tracery, the canopies on the left embrasure sported tracery patterns consisting of two cusped-arch lancet heads crowned by inscribed foiled shapes – a rather uncommon solution for microarchitectural canopies in this period, since it meant that the central mullion of such a composition would, once again, have to be left dangling. This marked emphasis on hanging elements may have narrowly preceded or paralleled the creation in ca. 1280–1290 of the earliest known pendant vault keystone in France, concealed within the church’s (south) sacristy. Yet, no matter how enticing the original scheme for the west front
might have been in its delicacy, prerestoration photographs make clear that the perfectly regular coursing of the ashlar masonry between the bases and canopies shows that the planned wall responds and their capitals (should they have had any) were omitted in the course of building the portal embrasure walls. What is more, the pinnacles rising between the aforementioned canopied units to accentuate the vertical divisions that would have been introduced by the freestanding supports directly below them have been visibly left unfinished, their principal volumes merely grossly blocked out. Although the pinnacles’ state of incompleteness may have had more to do with facilitating handling and assembly during building, the fact that their carving was not finished in situ immediately after installation may hint at an eagerness to put up as much of the façade in as little time as possible, before turning to tying up any minor loose ends. The same could perhaps be said of the canopies’ missing responds and freestanding supports, the production of which might have been considered superfluous once the decision was made to push forward with the construction of the church’s west end.

The paring down of the original concept for the west front central portal and the evident haste with which it was put together may well be revelatory of the chantier’s straitened finances at a time when ending the decades-long struggle to complete the building was of the essence, yet the ostensible hesitations in finalizing the design of the portal’s tympanum may be related to considerations of an altogether different order. In their present form, the tympanum and lintel
bear a *Last Judgment* scene broken down into an assemblage of individual figures or groups of figures, which have been rendered in high relief within the geometric constraints of a sharply delineated blind tracery pattern (fig. 24). In its noncompliance with the tiered frieze layout common in French Gothic portals, the Saint-Urbain tympanum allies itself with a relatively restrained number of thirteenth-century portals exhibiting analogous dispositions, spread throughout Northern France and Southeast England. Privileging the organizational logic of the relief sculpture as *tertium comparationis*, the closest parallel to the example at hand is most certainly the tympanum of the west façade central portal at Sens Cathedral, variously dated to the middle or second half of the thirteenth century. Another point of convergence between the two works is the illusionistic treatment of the blind tracery articulating their surface in such a way as to allude to true window openings. The sinuously molded profiles of the tracery, the miniature capitals and bases of its mullions, and the exaggerated flatness of the figural relief in the Sens tympanum, presumably once brought to vivid life by polychromy, would surely have been intended to evoke the riches of contemporary stained-glass windows. Even though the trompe-l’œil effect may appear to be less pronounced on the Saint-Urbain tympanum, the sculpture of which juts out more strongly, its interior face more than makes up for any lapses in make-believe by reiterating the same blind tracery framework and broadly similar Last Things iconography as on the exterior, though the latter was here executed in paint (fig. 25). Ultimately, the Saint-Urbain tympanum did not merely reimagine a tracery stained-glass window as if transposed into stone, it also replicated, on its verso, the idiosyncratic narrative structure of this kind of monumental art in yet a third medium, that of wall painting.

The essential uniqueness of this remarkable contrivance notwithstanding, enough evidence exists to suggest that it represented a revision
of the initial design. Jacques Bauer’s unpublished research shows that Saint-Urbain’s central portal tympanum, a trifling 11 cm in thickness, was a poor fit for its arched architectural frame, since their apexes were visibly misaligned before Selmersheim’s restoration, and masonry as wide as ca. 20 cm in places had to be inserted to fill the gap between them. This impression is further exacerbated by the complete independence from its surrounding frame of the massive and starkly protruding horizontal stringcourse, set between the base of the tympanum and the lintel – witness, above all, how this feature uncerremoniously runs against the sides of the adjacent shaft capitals, even concealing from view part of their carved foliate ornament (fig. 26). Moreover, the frieze carved with the Raising of the Dead, in two pieces placed symmetrically on either side of the trumeau, has noticeably been added to a lintel originally devoid of figural sculpture. The jointing of the stonework around the frieze’s two halves attests to their creation, together with the adjoining section of the emaciated shafts flanking the portal, as separate insets grafted onto shallow slots on the lintel’s exterior surface (fig. 27). In a blatant aesthetic non sequitur, the broad, luxuriously decorated borders embracing the contours of this frieze’s bottom end and sides stop in their tracks where they meet the aforementioned stringcourse segregating lintel from tympanum. All these discordances result in an unhappy, unresolved concubinage of different profiles and ornamental modes at the two ends of the stringcourse, which cannot possibly have been the original intent. On contemplation of the haphazard assembly of the present tympanum and lintel, it may be deduced that the sculpture now occupying the wall above the central portal would have been introduced relatively late in the construction of the west front’s main porch. At the time the molded archivolt planned to frame the tympanum was being put up, the latter would most likely have been conceived as a glazed and traceried opening, similar to the tympana still extant in the façade’s lateral portals. A putative west front equipped with a series of three glazed tympana would reproduce, on a much-reduced scale, the façade scheme monumentalized by Reims Cathedral around the mid-thirteenth century. Nonetheless, adopting a Rémois-type solution would entail having to confront the one fatal flaw in the use of stained glass in portal tympana, namely the fact that it could not be read from the building’s exterior; in Reims itself, the iconography that, in any contemporary church of the same stature, would have graced the tympana was displaced to the sculptured gables above them. At Saint-Urbain, it may be assumed that the desire to furnish the exterior of the central portal tympanum with a bold visual statement, manifested while construction of the upper parts of the west front portal zone would have been in full swing, would eventually have led to the subsequent adaptation of its architectural frame to receive sculpture instead of glass. On the church’s interior, the tympanum’s thin sheet of stone, ensconced deep within its arched frame and painted with another variation on the Last Judgment, fulfilled the original writ by relaying the message to an audience on this side of the façade wall, in the
same fashion as its stained-glass siblings above the lateral portals. Walking a fine line between artistic media, the west front central tympanum at Saint-Urbain attempts to meet the expectations associated with both sculptured and glazed tympana, while transcending both categories in offering an ad hoc compromise that was to remain without following.

If the evidence laid out in the above discussion is anything to go by, even the basic overall aspect of the pre-Selmersheim west front at Saint-Urbain, Troyes, may not be tributary to the original vision of the master mason who designed and began the church’s east end. The deliberate discontinuities in the weather moldings articulating the masonry surfaces of the façade and the rest of the building suggest that, by the time the former had been taken in hand, the initial plan – which, in all probability, would have eschewed such solecisms – could have been altered in more or less dramatic ways. Contrasting the west front with its inevitable comparanda, the transept portal zones, serves to highlight the creative gulf between the latter’s cogent display of formal and compositional virtuosity and the former’s mostly dry regurgitation of received motifs. Even where the resemblance between the three façades appears unmistakable, as in the case of the ornamental statue pedestals delved into earlier, a closer look brings to the fore morphological dissonances symptomatic of a later dating of the west front examples in relation to those of the transepts. Moving upwards from socle level, progressive modifications to the initial formula regarding the vaulting of the lateral porches and the form of the embrasures and tympanum of the central portal relate a story of limited financial means, hasty construction, and thoughtful changes of mind, which conspired to lead the final product even further away from whatever the ‘First Master’ might have had in store for it. In other words, the design for Saint-Urbain’s west front, including its lower part, had apparently been in flux from early on, and although largely cribbed from the visual universe of the initial author, it could not have been the latter’s work in its ultimate execution. Needless to emphasize, dissociating the exterior of the west front from the work carried out in the early-to-mid-1260s removes the last remaining obstacle to finally reuniting it with its interior, which, as we saw earlier, belonged to the edifice’s later parts, having reached the level of the aisle vaults by the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

Rereading Authorship at the Collegiate Church of Saint-Urbain

In revisiting the progress of construction at the site of Saint-Urbain at Troyes in the aftermath of the fire that tore through the interior of the choir and transept and of the other calamities that afflicted the church around the mid-1260s, this essay has proposed a more or less regular east-to-west sequence for the nave, in which the proto-Flamboyant forms of the responds and piers had been introduced by ca. 1300 and the westernmost bays of the aisles received their vaults by ca. 1320. Perhaps the most pregnant conclusion drawn from this revised chronology concerns the contemporaneity of conception and execution of the west façade’s lavishly ornamented exterior, largely plagiarized from the earlier transept fronts, and its more plainly accoutered interior, the legacy of the severe reduction of ornament in the transept porches and nave due to financial misfortune. The relative placement of these two distinctive sets of forms on either side of the same wall may offer an eloquent clue as to how they, and their relationship, were looked upon by their originator(s). Key in addressing this question is the analogous arrangement obtaining on the high altar piscina, which has yet to elicit any detailed comment in the literature. On the one hand, a cursory examination of its highly decorative arched and gabled front patently suggests a heavy debt to the for-
mal arsenal of the church’s east end and transept portal zones; on the other hand, the miniature responds carved on the piscina’s back wall to visually carry its microarchitectural vaulting were modeled after the capital-less responds rising on prismatic plinths in the western bays of the nave aisles (figs. 3, 28a–b). Installed in the choir for all to see, the piscina was made to flaunt its opulent exterior surfaces, relegating its more unassuming features to a lesser register, namely its less conspicuous interior recesses. 

Undoubtedly, the same two-register aesthetic attitude was at work on the west front, where, again, the more ‘presentable’ exterior was privileged over the parsimonious interior. More importantly, the piscina may serve up a few hints about the approximate date of these developments and their possible instigator. Given that it exhibits no signs of fire damage and that its crenellated and populated canopywork, brimming with possible Mariological associations, inspired the format of the apparitors’ stalls at the York Minster chapter house, the Saint-Urbain high altar piscina should date from between the mid-1260s and the
This relatively generous chronological range could surely be narrowed down further to the decade extending from the 1270s to the 1280s, when Cardinal Ancher, represented on the piscina as a donor opposite his uncle, was actively involved in the affairs of Saint-Urbain.

Soon after the fire, in early 1267, indulgences were issued by Clement IV to excite donations towards the building’s completion, yet the main impetus for construction in the following years stemmed once more from the Pantaléons themselves. Although Ancher claimed the lifelong right of conferring the prebends and offices of the Saint-Urbain chapter, according to Urban IV’s wishes, almost immediately after the latter’s death, and donated 500 livres tournois of his own to the fabric, he does not appear to have pursued the conclusion of building work at the church with any particular zest prior to 1273. In that year, the cardinal sought to reconcile himself with Count Henry III of Champagne, thus ending the property dispute that had caused the collegiate church’s coffers so much grief since the late 1260s. Shortly thereafter, Ancher ventured to audit the ailing fabric’s financial accounts, while in the following years, and until his death in 1286, he strove to protect the church’s property; granted the treasury several liturgical objects, ornaments, and relics; founded the post of marguillier; and paved the way for the establishment of a chaplain at the altar of the Virgin. Above all else, he seems to have done everything within his power to see the building to as speedy a completion as possible, soliciting donations of construction materials from Charles of Anjou, as we saw earlier, and securing a substantive bequest from Cardinal Guillaume de Bray, another one of Urban IV’s French protégés. Bearing the aforesaid in mind, it would be fair to conclude that the decade or so of Ancher’s sustained engagement with Saint-Urbain marked a decisive upturn in the chantier’s financial and administrative fortunes. The younger Pantaléon’s demise dissipated any chance of continued external funding, essentially condemning the building to incompleteness, since the collegiate chapter’s resources remained too anemic to carry forward a costly construction program, and the numerous indulgences issued in later decades apparently did very little to lighten the burden.

Locating the conception and construction of both the high altar piscina and the nave west end at the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain to the peak years of Cardinal Ancher’s patronage opens up new possibilities for reading the building’s chronology against the church’s early history and that of late-thirteenth-century French Rayonnant architecture more generally. After the financially distressing events of the mid-to-late-1260s, a new architectural vision was conceived for the transept porches and nave aisles, which favored more affordable bare-bones visual articulation over the excessive preciosity of the edifice’s east end. The basic means by which this paring down was achieved – namely, the elimination of foliate sculpture, shaft capitals, and tracery screens, along with the simplification of molded sections – tended to accentuate the progressive streamlining of forms already visible in the upper part of the transepts and crossing prior to the havoc wrought by the fire. Aside from its cost-effectiveness, the slick and sophisticated aesthetic of the vault ribs and arches penetrating into the core of the supports or skimming across their surfaces to attain the bases complemented well the metalwork-like quality of Saint-Urbain’s earlier parts and presaged wider contemporary trends, exemplified in the east ends of Saint-Germain, Auxerre, and Narbonne Cathedral in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the patron himself seems to have had different priorities. Ancher’s stalwart loyalty to the memory of his uncle is in full evidence during the 1270s, not only in the Coronation group on the high altar piscina, but also in his commissioning two lives of the pontiff from Gregory of Naples and Thierry de Vaucouleurs, a copy of which was deposited in the church’s treasury in
That the influx of new capital and donations of building materials through Ancher’s mediation in those years corresponded to a decisive, if tempered, return to the decorative luxuriance of the structure’s east end may denote the cardinal’s wish to honor as much as possible the original spirit of the Saint-Urbain project, as begun under Urban IV. Under these circumstances, the exterior of the west front was, like the piscina, conceived as a grand gesture worthy of the glories of the east end, although the expense involved and the haste with which it was being carried out, undoubtedly on Ancher’s orders, led to certain compromises along the way, further aggravated by last-minute revisions of major elements of the design, such as the central portal tympanum.

Returning to the question of authorship with which this essay began, the methodological shortcomings in attributing specific parts of the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain at Troyes to particular master masons should now be out in the open. The foregoing analysis has shown that it is no longer possible to artificially dismember the building’s west front in order to assign its lower exterior to a so-called ‘First Master’ and its upper exterior and interior to his alleged successor at the site, dubbed the ‘Second Master,’ solely on the evidence of a linear stylistic progression model, as earlier scholarship had done. Having dispensed with the evolutionary axiom dictating advancement from Rayonnant to Flamboyant forms, one is confronted with a three-step pattern, in which the elegant and adventurous visual vocabulary of the east end and transepts, and the plainer idiom of the transept porches and western nave aisles to which it gave its place, were synthesized, or, more appropriately, juxtaposed in the west façade. These three steps seem to correspond to at least three successive conceptions of the edifice, perhaps more emotively evoked in the roster of tracery motifs favored in each: for instance, the inscribed rounded trefoil that served as the dominant leitmotiv in the transept porches and western nave bay windows made timid appearances in the chevet’s buttress flyers, yet is entirely absent from the west front; and the cinquefoil introduced in this façade’s central portal canopies and lateral portal tympana was virtually unheralded by any of the macro- or microtracery seen anywhere else on the building. However, given both the remarkable continuity between these different visions of the building and the evidence for numerous partial revisions, especially in the west front, it would be too temerarious to attempt to match these shifts to the made-up artistic personalities of individual master masons, especially considering the fluctuating degree of the patron’s involvement in the project. Even in the case of a building often considered as stupefyingly visionary as Saint-Urbain, it would perhaps be best to acknowledge, with Marvin Trachtenberg and Caroline Bruzelius, that, in its execution, it represented less of a unitary project and more of a process of gradual adaptation to evolving financial and administrative conditions, as well as to direct patronal input. Ultimately, bringing the narrative of Saint-Urbain’s creation up to date with current understanding of the messy realities of building in the Middle Ages allows us to foreground the biography of this outstanding edifice as illuminated – but not dominated – by the personae of the anonymous craftsmen who designed and constructed it.

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I am immensely grateful to the highly efficient staff at the Archives départementales de l’Aube and the Médiathèque Jacques-Chirac in Troyes, as well as to the Archives nationales and the Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie in Paris, for help with exploring their fabulously rich collections. I am also greatly indebted to the generosity of Saint-Urbain’s churchwardens, who over the years allowed me to poke around and familiarize myself with the edifice in their care. My work in France received support from the University of Cyprus, while part of the research for this essay was carried out during my time as Guest Scholar at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, in the fall of 2018. Robert Bork, Caroline Bruzelius, and Chris Schabel all read earlier drafts of the text and offered helpful suggestions. Moreover, this study has benefitted enormously from the comments and sound advice of Gerrit Walczak and the journal’s two anonymous reviewers. In its final form, this article is dedicated in memory of Paul Crossley (1945–2019), kind mentor and friend.

1 Paris, Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie (henceforth MPP), 0061/0/06 (Troyes, Église Saint-Urbain, 1er dossier, 1839–1880), 25 March 1874: “Il en résulte que cette merveilleuse châsse en pierre de taille, aussi délicate qu’un chef-d’œuvre d’Orfèvrerie, se dégrade de la base au sommet.” Or, cette lanterne vitrée d’une extrême légèreté, n’étant maintenue que par les contreforts, tout doit périr avec eux.”


8 On the status of ‘craftsmen’ and ‘artists’ in the Middle Ages and on their modern biographies, see Jens Rüffer,

On Cardinal Ancher and his career in the Roman Church, see Joseph Maubach, Die Kardinäle und ihre Politik um die Mitte des XIII. Jahrhunderts unter den Päpsten Innocenz IV., Alexander IV., Urban IV., Clemens IV. (1243–1268), Bonn 1902, 99–100. On the pier inscription, see Nicolas Des Guerrois, La sainteté chrestienne, contenant les vie, mort, et miracles
de plusieurs saints de France, et autres pays, qui ne sont pas dans les Vies des Saints, et dont les reliques sont au diocèse et ville de Troyes, Troyes 1637, fol. 38r. The inscription in question was apparently still to be seen a few years prior to the foundation’s suppression at the Revolution, see Jean-Charles Courtalon-Delaistre, Topographie historique de la ville et du diocèse de Troyes, 3 vols., Troyes 1783–1784, vol. 2, 155. For the piscina, consult mainly Adolphe-Napoléon Didron, Une piscine du Moyen Âge, in: Annales archéologiques 7, 1847, 36–40; Gerhart B. Ladner, Die Papsbildnisse des Altertums und des Mittelalters, 2 vols., Vatican City 1941–1970, vol. 2, 131–132; Julian Gardner, Cardinal Ancher and the Piscina in Saint-Urbain at Troyes, in: Cecil L. Striker with James S. Davis 1984, 79–83; Christian Freigang, Imitare ecclesias nobilis: Die Kathedralen von Narbonne, Toulouse und Rodez und die norfranzösische Rayonnantgotik im Languedoc, Worms 1992, 277 n. 191. 14 Gallet 2013 (as in note 12), 15–16. 15 Charles Lalorte (ed.), Documents sur l’abbaye de Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains de Troyes, Troyes 1874, 120–121, 125–129; Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 852–853. 16 Christian Freigang, Imitate ecclesias nobilis: Die Kathedralen von Narbonne, Toulouse und Rodez und die nordfranzösische Rayonnantgotik im Languedoc, Worms 1992, 277 n. 191. 17 Davis 1984 (as in note 5). 18 Bruzelius 1875 (as in note 12). 19 Christian Freigang, Imitate ecclesias nobilis: Die Kathedralen von Narbonne, Toulouse und Rodez und die nordfranzösische Rayonnantgotik im Languedoc, Worms 1992, 277 n. 191. 20 Onnen 2004 (as in note 12), 80–86. 21 Gallet 2013 (as in note 12), 15–16. 22 Charles Lalorte (ed.), Documents sur l’abbaye de Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains de Troyes, Troyes 1874, 120–121, 125–129; Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 852–853. 23 A. M. P., 0081/010/010 (Troyes, Église Saint-Urbain, 2° dossier, 1881–1894), 22 January 1882: “Rapport sur l’achèvement de la Restauration,” addressed to the Minister of Arts; excerpts and commentary in Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 851–852. 24 Lalorte 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, lxxvii–lxxx, 264–268 (for explicit mention of the fire in this account, see 267–268: “Et hec ante combustionem: post combustionem vero [...]”). 25 Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 853 justified the absence of fire traces on the lower story of the transept by postulating the existence of a temporary wall at the entrance to the choir, which would have cordoned off the area under active construction and curtailed the spread of the flames further west. The evidence for a starting date in the 1270s for the second campaign was first discussed in Bruzelius 1884 (as in note 12). 26 A. M. P., 0081/010/010 (Troyes, Église Saint-Urbain, 2° dossier, 1881–1894), 16 July 1890: “Achèvement de la Restauration de l’Église St. Urbain.” The transept was not restored. See also Mack, 1887, who mentions a new wall in the second campaign. The fire occurred in the area under active construction and curtailed the spread of the flames further west. The evidence for a starting date in the 1270s for the second campaign was first discussed in Bruzelius 1884 (as in note 12). 27 Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 853 justified the absence of fire traces on the lower story of the transept by postulating the existence of a temporary wall at the entrance to the choir, which would have cordoned off the area under active construction and curtailed the spread of the flames further west. The evidence for a starting date in the 1270s for the second campaign was first discussed in Bruzelius 1884 (as in note 12). 28 A. M. 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On the representational accuracy of donors’ models, see Emanuel S. Klinkenberg, Compressed Meanings: The Donor’s Model in Medieval Art to around 1300, Turnhout 2009, 12, 15–16, 109–112, 243, 249, 253–254; Corinne Schleif, Kneeling on the Threshold: Donors Negotiating Realms Between and Between, in: Elina Gertsman and Jill Stevenson (eds.), Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces, Woodbridge 2012, 185–216, esp. 207, 210–211. Didron 1847 (as in note 33), 38, followed more recently by Onnen 2004 (as in note 12), 76, take Ancher’s model to represent either the transept or the nave; by contrast, Arnaud 1837 (as in note 12), 193, saw a representation of the nave. The absence of a roof over the model may have been prompted by the proximity of the canopy directly above it, and thus have had little to do with the actual progress of building at the time.

On the dangers accruing from wood placed against the church’s walls (including fire and humidity), see ADA, 10G4*, fols. 6r (1526), 58r (1530); 10G6*, fols. 128v, 130r (1551); 10G7*, fols. 90v (1563), 130v (1566). The chapter’s permission for the installation of a coal store or bunker in the garden of the glazier François Pothier, between two of Saint-Urbain’s buttresses, considers the possibility that it might be exploited by robbers to break into the church through the window above it: ADA, 10G7*, fols. 6v, 8r (both 1559). For the demolition of a small shed constructed by a tenant behind his house and next to the church, see ADA, 10G3*, fols. 7v (1526). On processions passing through the yards of the houses adjacent to the church, and the tenants’ refusal to cooperate, see ADA, 10G7*, fols. 6v (1559), 7v – 8r (same year). For one of the church’s gargoyles discharging its water on the roof of the house inhabited by a glazier of the Macadré family, see ADA, 10G1*, fol. 41r (1592); for a similar complaint filed by a different tenant, see 10G12*, fol. 22or (1601).

On the demolition of these houses, see Salet 1955 (as in note 12), 99; Onnen 2004 (as in note 12), 87–88. Successive reports on the progress of freeing up the church from its surrounding structures can be found in MPP, 0081/010/0106 (Troyes, Église Saint-Urbain, 1er dossier, 1839–1880).


On the demolition of these houses, see Salet 1955 (as in note 12), 106.
Houses are known to have been built against the north wall of Saint-Urbain by the third quarter of the fourteenth century, see ADA, 10G1*, fol. 20r; 10G340*, fol. 167 – v.

On the altars of Saint-Urbain, see Courtalon-De- laisestre 1783–1784 (as in note 13), vol. 2, 155; Méchin 1878 (as in note 12), 41–57; Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, lxxviii – xc; Babeau 1891 (as in note 12), 45–49, here 45 and the drawings for the post-1743 reconfiguration in ADA, 10G7*, fol. 57; 10G7* (1746–1757/1759–1770, here 1756–1757), fol. 57; 10G7* ("Extinction des chapellenies fondées en l'église St Urbain de Troyes," 1784–1786).


ADA, 10G10* (1389–1390), fol. 15v. According to Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 263, 310, 321, the high altar remained unconsecrated into the 1500s.

The altar of Saint Nicholas was founded by 1286, see ibid., vol. 5, 309–310; Charles Lalore (ed.), Collection des principaux obituaires et confraternités du diocèse de Troyes, Troyes 1882, 10, 327 (note that Lalore’s edition of Saint-Urbain’s 1711 Liber distributionum, on which his ‘obituary’ is based, has been almost invariably reproduced in Auguste Longnon et al. [eds.], Obituaires de la province de Sens, Paris 1902–1923, vol. 4, 548–571). The chaplaincy of the Holy Cross was founded in 1355 by the cleric Pierre de Verdun and his sister, Isabelle, both citizens of Troyes, Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 321–323; members of the Verdun family continued to be buried in this chapel down to the fifteenth century: ADA, 10G10, clausula from the will of Marionne, widow of Adem in de Ver- dun (1404); 10G109*bis (1400–1411, here 1400–1401), fol. 3v. For the chaplaincy of Saint Margaret, founded in 1333 by the knight Jacques de la Noé and his wife, Marguerite de Pontangy, see ADA, 10G1*, fol. 14v; 10G9/1 (1333 and copy of 1525); Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 318; Lalore 1882 (as above), 328. Prime was also celebrated on this altar, see ADA, 10G813* (1423), fol. 1r. The chaplaincy of Saint Luke existed already by 1405, see Lalore 1882 (as above), 331, 365. The altar of the Virgin was founded in 1328 by Dean Ren- aud de Colombey, acting on and augmenting the earlier stated intentions of Cardinal Ancher, ADA, 10G1*, fol. 17v; 10G7* (1328 original and 1407 vidimus); Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 317–318; Lalore 1882 (as above), 356. The altar and confraternity of Saint Anne are first mentioned in 1347, ADA, 10G109*bis (here 1407–1408), fol. 42r. The chapels of Saint Luke and Saint Anne are paired in ADA, 10G48* (here 1755–1756), fol. 4v; The Troyes Mémoire: The Making of a Medieval Tapestry, with Excerpts from the Ac- count Books of the Church of Sainte-Madeleine, trans. by Tina Kane, Woodbridge 2010, 55.


ADA, 10G10* (1389–1390), fol. 15v. According to Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 263, 310, 321, the high altar remained unconsecrated into the 1500s.

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The altar of Saint Nicholas was founded by 1286, see ibid., vol. 5, 309–310; Charles Lalore (ed.), Collection des principaux obituaires et confraternités du diocèse de Troyes, Troyes 1882, 10, 327 (note that Lalore’s edition of Saint-Urbain’s 1711 Liber distributionum, on which his ‘obituary’ is based, has been almost invariably reproduced in Auguste Longnon et al. [eds.], Obituaires de la province de Sens, Paris 1902–1923, vol. 4, 548–571). The chaplaincy of the Holy Cross was founded in 1355 by the cleric Pierre de Verdun and his sister, Isabelle, both citizens of Troyes, Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 321–323; members of the Verdun family continued to be buried in this chapel down to the fifteenth century: ADA, 10G10, clausula from the will of Marionne, widow of Adem in de Ver- dun (1404); 10G109*bis (1400–1411, here 1400–1401), fol. 3v. For the chaplaincy of Saint Margaret, founded in 1333 by the knight Jacques de la Noé and his wife, Marguerite de Pontangy, see ADA, 10G1*, fol. 14v; 10G9/1 (1333 and copy of 1525); Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 318; Lalore 1882 (as above), 328. Prime was also celebrated on this altar, see ADA, 10G813* (1423), fol. 1r. The chaplaincy of Saint Luke existed already by 1405, see Lalore 1882 (as above), 331, 365. The altar of the Virgin was founded in 1328 by Dean Ren- aud de Colombey, acting on and augmenting the earlier stated intentions of Cardinal Ancher, ADA, 10G1*, fol. 17v; 10G7* (1328 original and 1407 vidimus); Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 317–318; Lalore 1882 (as above), 356. The altar and confraternity of Saint Anne are first mentioned in 1347, ADA, 10G109*bis (here 1407–1408), fol. 42r. The chapels of Saint Luke and Saint Anne are paired in ADA, 10G48* (here 1755–1756), fol. 4v; The Troyes Mémoire: The Making of a Medieval Tapestry, with Excerpts from the Account Books of the Church of Sainte-Madeleine, trans. by Tina Kane, Woodbridge 2010, 55.
On Dean Adam, see Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 293–298, 303, 305–308, 310–311; Lalore 1882 (as in note 44), 311–314; Lalore 1882 (as in note 44), 361–362. The altar is situated on the side of the Rue Moyenne in ADA, 10G1*, fol. 18r. The chaplaincy of Saint Gerald, first attested in the early 1400s, as will be seen below, was probably founded post-1389. Note that Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 879, confuses the altar of Saint Leonard with that of the Four Saints (one of whom was Saint Lawrence).

For the relevant excerpt from the will of Pierre Bierne, see ADA, 10G9/2: "Deinde dictus testator corpus suum humiliter et devote tradit, voluit et ordinavit ecclesiasticum sepulture, quam elegit in ecclesia sancti Urbani, in navo ipsius ecclesiae, inter ultimum et penultimum pilari ipsius navis ecclesiae, a parte aliaris beate Marie Magdalenae." For the details of the foundation of the Magdalene altar, see Paris, Archives nationales (henceforth AN), J667, fol. 30r (no. 97); Robert Fawtier et al. (eds.), Registres du Trésor des Chartes, Paris 1958–1999, no. 2230; consult also ADA, 10G1*, fol. 111; Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 311–314; Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 313–314; Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 313–314; Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 313–314.

The Troyes confraternity of painters (whose members included the city’s illuminators, glaziers, and embroiderers), dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, held their service every year on the feast of Saint John a Porta Latina until 1594, when they requested the canons’ permission to transfer their celebrations to the day of the feast of Saint Luke. In the decision to relocate to the altar of Saints Peter and Paul in the early seventeenth century was prompted by the ‘incommodity’ of that of Saint John the Evangelist. For all this, see ADA, 10G9*, fol. 21v (1585), 38v (1586); 10Gio*, fol. 91v (1591); 10Gutta*, fol. 29v (1592), 81r (1594), 97r (1594); 10G12*, fol. 18v (1595); 10G14*, fol. 166r (1614).

Even though the confraternity was not particularly
strong in numbers throughout the sixteenth century, its members might have preferred a less cumbersome space for their devotions, away from the aisles. On the membership and organization of the confraternity of painters in the sixteenth century, see Audrey Nassieu Maupas, Le métier de peintre à Troyes au XVIe siècle, in: Frédéric Elsig (ed.), Peindre à Troyes au XVIe siècle, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) 2015, 26–35, esp. 28–30. On the establishment of the altar of Saints Peter and Paul in 1340 via the will of Étienne du Port, chanter of Saint-Urbain, and its attachment to a nave pier, see AN, Jj72, fol. 239v (no. 329); ADA, 10G4, fol. 11v; 10G7, fol. 273r (1572); Arthur Prévost, Histoire du diocèse de Troyes pendant la Révolution, Troyes 1908–1909, vol. 1, 202; Lalore 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 318; Lalore 1882 (as in note 44), 373–374; Fawtier et al. 1958–1999 (as in note 49), no. 4226.

55 Louis Grodecki, Les vitraux de Saint-Urbain de Troyes, in: Congrès archéologique de France 113, 1955, 123–138; here 138; Anne Prache and Nicole Blondel (eds.), Les vitraux de Champagne-Ardennes, Paris 1992, 276–283, here 280. Seeing as the glass throughout the aisles appears to belong to the early fourteenth century, the windows would presumably have been boarded shut up until its insertion – this would almost certainly be true of the easternmost nave bays, the architecture of which dated back to the early 1260s. On these issues, see Achim Hubel, Das Verhältnis von Glasmaleriewerkstatt, Bauhütte und Auftraggeber am Beispiel des Regensburger Doms, in: Ute Bednarz, Leonhard Helten, and Guido Siebert (eds.), Im Rahmen bleiben: Glasmalerei in der Architektur des 13. Jahrhunderts, Berlin 2017, 12–40, esp. 35–40.

56 Salet 1955 (as in note 12), 113–119; Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 849, 872–873; Onnen 2004 (as in note 12), 53–58, 60, 86–87, 90–93, 105. On Saint-Nicaise, the most thorough and reliable account is still Maryse Bideault, see Arnaud Timbert, Technique et esthétique de la bague dans l’architecture gothique du Nord de la France au XIIe siècle, in: Archéologie médiévale 35, 2005, 39–50.

57 Davis 1984 (as in note 5), 872.

58 On shaft-rings, their functions, and their aesthetics, see Arnaud Timbert, Technique et esthétique de la bague dans l’architecture gothique du Nord de la France au XIIe siècle, in: Archéologie médiévale 35, 2005, 39–50. The one exception here is the pedestal in the left embrasure, the pinnacles of which look as if left unfinished.


ing of ADA, 10G41* [1407–1408]) contains a number of items bearing the arms of France, while others are specified as branded with the arms of the queens Jeanne d’Évreux (d. 1371) and Jeanne de Bourbon (d. 1378). Another inventory of the church’s possessions in the hands of the marguilliers (1468) also refers to a textile canopy and banner marked with the arms of Urban IV, France, Champagne, and Navarre, Laloré 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 331–351, esp. 334–335.


65 MPP, 0081/010/0106 (Troyes, Église Saint-Urbain, 11th–12th centuries, 1839–1880), 26 May 1847. The “Devis estimatif supplémentaire de divers travaux à exécuter au portail au midi de l’église de St. Urbain” reveals the difficulties encountered during the careful demolition and rebuilding of the south transept porch on account of the iron pegs and lead sealing in the masonry joints, which had to be sawn through. The en dîlût shafts in the transept portal zones display evidence of canals for the pouring of lead between them and their bases, for which technique see generally Arnaud Timbert, L’emploi du plomb et du support monolithique dans l’architecture gothique: Les exemples des cathédrales de Laon, Noyon, Senlis et Soissons, in: Arnaud Timbert (ed.), L’homme et la matière: L’emploi du plomb et du fer dans l’architecture gothique, Paris 2009, 115–118, esp. 115–116.

66 On sculpture carried out après la pose, see Camille Enlart, Notes sur les sculptures exécutées après la pose du XIe au XIIe siècle, in: Mémoires de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France 54, 1894, 288–301; Paul Williamson, Gothic Sculpture, 1140–1300, New Haven 1995, 5–6.

67 Fichot 1884–1900 (as in note 12), vol. 5, 107, 109 fig. 6; MPP, 0082/010/2012, (10)306 (drawn up in 1903).

68 Gallet 2013 (as in note 12); Yves Gallet, Avignon, Palais des Papes: La voûte à clef pendante du Porche des Champeaux et sa place dans l’architecture européenne aux XIVe et XVe siècles, in: Congrès archéologique de France 175, 2016, 101–112.

69 For a small collection of such stills, see MPP, 0084/010/1012. The coursing is easier to read on the left embrasure, since the one on the right was pierced with a later arched opening (subsequently restored out).

70 On the Saint-Urbain central portal, see also Günther Binding, Maßwerk, Darmstadt 1989, 78–80; Williamson 1995 (as in note 66), 163.


73 Two copies of the text read by Jacques Bauer on 20 February 1953 before the Société académique de l’Aube regarding the Saint-Urbain Last Judgment tympanum are kept in ADA, 2723. A summary of Bauer’s talk was published as La double représentation du Jugement Dernier du portail de l’église Saint-Urbain de Troyes, in: Bulletin mensuel de la Société académique de l’Aube 24, 1953, no. 2. In this scholar’s view, the Saint-Urbain central portal tympanum and lintel sculpture, so ill-fitting in its present context, represents a thorough reworking of an ensemble having originated in some other, unknown building.

74 The architectural frame of a Gothic portal was normally erected (occasionally well) in advance of the installation of its tympanum to allow building work to continue unimpeded onto the façade’s upper parts, see Fabienne Joubert, La sculpture gothique en France, XIIe–XIIIe siècles, Paris 2008, 162. For a detailed archaeological analysis of precisely such a construction sequence, see Manfred Schuler with Tilmann Breuer, Philip Caston, and Manfred Fürst, Das Fürstenportal des Bamberger Domes, Bamberg 1991.

75 On the west portal tympana and gables at Reims, see Meredith Parsons Lillich, The Gothic Stained Glass of Reims Cathedral, University Park, PA 2011, 211–214; Jean Wirth, La sculpture de la cathédrale de Reims et sa place dans l’art du XIIIe siècle, Geneva 2017, 120.

76 That the high altar piscina constituted a focal point of the clergy’s attention when in the choir was implicit in the chapter’s decision in the 1530s to mount a panel listing the readings on annual feasts “in an eminent location near the piscina,” so that the canons would
not be able to pretend to forgetfulness: ADA, 10G3*, fol. 117v.


81 On the feeble revenues (and proportional taxation) of Saint-Urbain at the end of the thirteenth century, see Paul Fabre and Louis Duchesne (eds.), *Le Liber Censuum de l’Église romaine*, vol. 1, Paris 1910, 193; Auguste Longnon (ed.), *Documents relatifs au comté de Champagne et de Brie 1172–1361*, vol. 3, Paris 1914, xiv–xv, 131 (compare the value of Saint-Urbain’s possessions and rents with that of other Troyes institutions, such as Saint-Étienne or Notre-Dame-aux-Naînains). The situation may have worsened by the second quarter of the fourteenth century, when Saint-Urbain’s prebends were described as “of small value” (1330) and the annual value of the dean’s office did not exceed 25 livres tournois (1337): Guillaume Mollat (ed.), *Jean XXII (1316–1334): Lettres communes*, Paris 1904–1947, no. 50204; Jean-Marie Vidal (ed.), *Benoit XII (1334–1342): Lettres communes*, Paris 1903–1911, no. 4174. On the indulgences promulgated after Ancher’s death, see Lalorre 1875–1890 (as in note 2), vol. 5, 310, 314–315, 318–321, 323, 330–331, 351–356. A series of late medieval documents listing the indulgences available at Saint-Urbain is kept in ADA, 10G1.


83 Paravicini-Bagliani 1969 (as in note 2), esp. 75–78.
