

# PARIS

IN ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, AND ART

## TEACHER MANUAL

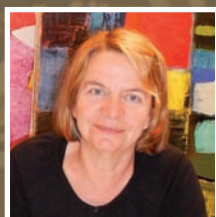


MAY PEYRON SPANGLER

The teacher manual for *Paris in Architecture, Literature, and Art* provides detailed commentaries of all documents presented in the student textbook, with analysis that will be engaging to a scholar, but also accessible to instructors without a background in architecture, literature, or art.

Visual documents present works of art and monuments that students will likely already be familiar with, as well as films chosen to exemplify each period. Textual documents include memoirs, novels, poems, and theoretical essays, some translated for the first time, making them available to students not necessarily fluent in French.

The wide variety of pedagogical features gives flexibility for instructors to fit their specific areas of interest as well as those of the target audience. Among those are preamble activities and timelines that introduce chapters' main ideas, observation questions that build critical reading and analytical skills, interactive activities that foster cooperative learning, and projects that include oral and short film presentations.



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May Peyron Spangler

# Paris in Architecture, Literature, and Art

TEACHER MANUAL



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This book is dedicated to Stuart Manley Spangler  
January 2, 1993—August 27, 2011



Space is infinite and time is eternal where you belong now,  
But even for us during our earthly short life,  
Love is of an infinite nature.  
It is our indestructible tie to you now.

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# Introduction

## **I1 An Interdisciplinary Course That Bridges the Gap between Humanities and Architecture**

*Paris in Architecture, Literature and Art* is a wide-ranging textbook in cultural studies that capitalizes on the little exposure liberal arts students have to architecture, and the popularity of Paris among students from a wide group of majors and levels. Designed for a college course in the humanities, it also lends itself for a high school course, a study abroad program in Paris, or a continuing education course for adults preparing a visit in Paris. This wide outreach across the curriculum has the added advantage of bringing together students with diverse fields of expertise, which energizes class discussions and accomplishes the interdisciplinary intention of the course.

The course focuses on Paris, which throughout history has been the stage and experimental ground for artists and intellectuals from all over the world, making it the crucible of western thoughts and consummate material for an interdisciplinary study. *Paris in Architecture, Literature and Art* presents an overview of Paris from the Middles Ages to present, and while historical in its organization, is unique in the way it identifies and translates aesthetic principles from one

discipline to another. This is especially true for architecture: while ties between literature and art have often been studied, with such renowned writers as Baudelaire, Zola and Apollinaire, it has not been the case with architecture, which has mostly been a discipline of its own.

The objective of *Paris in Architecture, Literature and Art* is to bridge the gap between the humanities and architecture by highlighting ideals and principles common to the fields of art, architecture and literature. This approach is especially valuable and exciting as it breaks new grounds, inviting students to explore for instance what an impressionist literature or cubist architecture might be.

## **12 Chapters Organized around a Particular Intellectual Period**

*Paris in Architecture, Literature and Art* is divided into chapters covering significant intellectual movements such as Gothic, Renaissance, classicism, romanticism, realism, impressionism, cubism, modernism and postmodernism. Visual documents consist of paintings, sculptures and buildings chosen to exemplify a period, which students will likely be already familiar with. Texts are mostly primary and contemporaneous with the studied period, and selected from a wide variety of sources: letters or memoirs by central political figures introducing historical periods, source texts by architects presenting different styles of architecture, literary pieces offering textual images of the artifacts, and critical essays exposing aesthetic principles common to varied disciplines.

In the Student Textbook, each chapter features a preliminary section that provides quick reference data and introduces the chapter's main idea. The body of the chapter is organized around visual and textual material from varied disciplines, with activities designed to guide students in identifying the principles governing a particular intellectual period before moving them from one discipline to another. Among those, observation questions build critical reading and analyzing skills, interactive activities foster cooperative learning, and projects lead to oral and short film presentations.

The Teacher Manual provides detailed commentaries of all documents presented in the Student Textbook, with analysis that will be engaging to a scholar, but also accessible to instructors without a background in architecture, literature or art. The wide variety of pedagogical features gives flexibility for instructors to fit their specific areas of interest, as well as those of the target audience.

## 13 Pedagogical Tools Fostering a Critical Thinking Approach

**Timelines** in the Student Textbook provide quick reference data, and teachers may choose to go over this preliminary material to draw attention to salient features. This is especially useful when requiring a certain amount of memorization for tests—which should be kept to large brushstrokes emphasizing a big picture approach (see quiz samples in the appendix).

**Preamble activities** in the Teacher Manual introduce the main idea of a chapter and establish a casual atmosphere to the classroom conducive to interactive learning. Those activities are often based on individual experiences, so that students may relate personally to other cultural periods. For instance, chapter 4 is based on Descartes' idea of man's ability to think on his own, put to great advantage by Louis XIV to implement an absolute monarchy. The preamble activity "Which kind of thinker are you?" helps students realize how much their own thinking may still be based on the *Cogito*, and become aware of Descartes' unique importance in the history of ideas in a personal way.

Preamble activities are designed to establish an atmosphere for communication, and the teacher may share some personal experiences as a model. In chapter 2 on Gothic architecture, I give such an example with my aesthetic experience of beauty where light is instrumental, as is the case in Gothic cathedrals. Sharing one's insight requires a certain amount of intellectual risk-taking, and celebrating it in students helps to promote an independent mode of thinking and to establish a collectively creative class.

**Observation questions** offer strategies to identify salient features and patterns in an image, a text or a building. Those questions are the kind students will eventually learn to ask themselves.

*For a painting*, the observation questions address the way it portrays reality, perspective, composition, light and color. Paintings are usually more experimental in nature (easier done on a canvas than in a building), and often lead new movements. They often come first in our studies as well, while texts come second as they formalize the ideas behind a particular period.

*For a text*, the observation questions consider words etymology, phonetic, figural and literal meanings, as well as the semantic and lexical fields they form. The questions also investigate figures of style, narrative structure, and borrowed concepts from other disciplines such as psychoanalysis, linguistic, sociology, gender studies and science.

*In architecture*, the observation questions aim at developing the skills to read a building in plan, facade and volume, identify principles inherent to buildings construction and style, and develop a critical attitude towards architecture. Exercises include sketching facades and plans, and labeling their various components, as well as “moving” inside a building and experiencing its space. Students may also keep a sketching journal to learn discerning main design ideas and styles of architecture.

Some observation questions may be prepared as homework, especially those following a text given to read before class, which the teacher may use as a point of departure for class discussion. Others, especially those concerning paintings and buildings, may be used with a slideshow presentation to elicit students’ comments.

**Recap activities** help discern the specificities of a document and discriminate which aspects might be particular enough to form principles inherent to a given period. Those exercises may be done in small groups reporting to the class, which then evaluates and summarizes them on the board. At this point, the principles are “ready” to be moved into another discipline.

**Discussion activities** promote critical thinking, which occurs at any point in the process but requires judicious discernment when translating principles from one discipline to another. The discussion questions do not shy away from presenting sophisticated ideas of an abstract or technical nature. For example, the first chapter not only looks at the literal walls encircling Paris throughout the age but also considers the figural function of walls as “analogical operators.” Then such abstract ideas are implemented and balanced with exercises of a practical nature, such as the observation questions, interaction exercises and projects.

While the pointed nature of some of the discussion questions helps relate them to larger questions central to the course, some questions are open-ended to encourage students in establishing their own area of interest and articulating their own approach they can later develop into a paper.

**Interaction activities** foster cooperative learning and help build a warm atmosphere among students. Those include working in pairs or small groups on any of the observation, recap and discussion exercises, as well as quick web searches, virtual visits of monuments, or brainstorming over a particular question. In some cases, it may take the form of spontaneous play-acting or more elaborate projects done outside of class.

A few competitive activities can energize a class. Debate topics are included in each chapter, and team trivia questions can be created on test review material, the timeline at the beginning of each chapter, or slides recognition of buildings. Students may also design a questionnaire to ask other groups, and you may designate “judges” ahead of time to come-up with criteria to rate the competitors.

**Projects** are usually prepared outside class and may be assigned to one or more students for an oral presentation to introduce a class. Those include skits impersonating political, artistic or intellectual figures, preparing interviews or surveys for other students, and creating short films.

**Promenades** are centered on significant buildings that could not be studied in class for lack of time. Those can be used for oral presentation topics or for one-page papers that can be assembled at the end of the semester as a guide for students who intend to visit Paris.

Finally, teachers may ask students to keep a **sketching journal** when showing slides of buildings in class, and/or for a test review at home. Those sketches would consist of the fewest possible lines that would still grab the basic design idea and style of a building. When checking journals, teachers may select a few sketches (keeping it confidential), and use them for a chapter review to see if other students can recognize the building.

## 14 Material for the Course: Texts

Many texts, such as letters and memoirs by central political figures, source texts by architects, and literary pieces are translated from French for the first time, making them accessible to students in other disciplines not necessarily familiar with the French language.

Teachers may want to supplement the short texts and extracts with the complete reading of one of the novels, for instance, Balzac's *Old Goriot*, Zola's *The Human Beast*, or Guène's *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*.

The following books and/or photocopies may be put on reserve at the institution's library for further studies, oral presentations and papers:

### Books on Architecture

- Andrew Ayers, *The Architecture of Paris*. Stuttgart/London: Editions Axel Menges, 2004.
- Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France 1500–1700*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1953.
- Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, *Le Guide du patrimoine, Paris*. Paris: Hachette, 1994.
- Anthony Sutcliffe, *Paris, an Architectural History*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993.

## Literary Books

- Chapter 1: Guillaume de Lorris. *Romance of the Rose*. Translated by Frances Horgan. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Book and/or photocopies of pp. 3–61.
- Chapter 2: Abélard and Héloïse. *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*. Translated by Betty Radice. London: Penguin Book, 1974. Book and/or photocopies of pp. 57–156.
- Chapter 7: Emile Zola. *The Human Beast*. Translated by Roger Pearson. New York: Oxford World's Classics, 1996. Book and/or photocopies of the first chapter.
- Chapter 7: Roland Barthes. *The Eiffel Tower*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1979. Photocopies of pp. 3–17.
- Chapter 9: André Breton. "Pont-Neuf," in *Free Reign*. Translated by Michel Parmentier and Jacqueline d'Amboise. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. Photocopies of pp. 221–28.
- Chapter 10: Faïza Guène. *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*. Translated by Sarah Adams. Orlando: Harcourt, 2006.

## 15 Material for the Course: Visuals

Although the Student Textbook provides extensive material for the classroom work, teachers may provide their own slideshow for each chapter. It would include the material presented in the student textbook, most being available on the Internet (and assuming I will have uploaded on Wikimedia Commons the documents in the Public Domain that are missing). Finally, the slideshow would incorporate photographs teachers have taken or will take of their trips to Paris.

While film excerpts are an essential part of the course, one full feature may be shown in class, such as *Queen Margot* or *Hate*. If shown one evening, it has the added benefit of canceling little-attended classes like those before Spring break or Thanksgiving.

Some films may be put on reserve for students' individual viewing, such as *Queen Margot*, *The Taking of Power by Louis XIV*, *Six in Paris*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Amélie*, *La Bête Humaine*, *Paris Je t'aime*, *Midnight in Paris*, *Hate* and/or *Deephan*.

Film excerpts are suggested in the Student Textbook and Teacher Manual for each chapter, and I also intend to make short films—so please check me on

YouTube. You will need to collect ahead of time from your library or YouTube some of the followings:

Chapter 1: *Paris from Above* (Sylvain Augier, 2009).

Chapter 2: \**The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (Disney, 1996). Esmeralda's song is available on YouTube.

Chapter 3: \**Queen Margot* (Berry, 1994); *The Da Vinci code* (Howard, 2006); *The Lovers on the Bridge* (Carax, 1999).

Chapter 4: \**The Taking of Power by Louis XIV* (Rossellini, 1966).

Chapter 5: \**Napoleon* (Gance, 1927) the excerpt was available on YouTube at some point; "Place de l'Étoile" in \**Six à Paris* (Rohmer, 1965).

Chapter 6: *Nana* (Jaque, 1955); *The Phantom of the Opera* (Schumacher, 2004); *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001).

Chapter 7: \**La Bête Humaine* (Renoir, 1938); James Bond, *A View to a Kill* (Glen, 1985); \*"Tuileries" in *Paris Je t'aime* (Joël and Ethan Coen, 2006).

Chapter 8: Many short films on the Villa Savoye are available on YouTube, including mine, May Peyron Spangler, *Cubist Architecture: The Villa Savoye* <https://youtu.be/U7OVxyL-z68>.

Chapter 9: "Gare du Nord" in *Six à Paris* (Rouch, 1965); \**Midnight in Paris* (Woody Allen, 2011).

Chapter 10: *The Da Vinci code* (Howard, 2006); \**Hate* (Kassovitz, 1995); *Deephan* (Audiard, 2015).

# Gothic Paris

## *Notre-Dame and the Île de la Cité*

Invasions stop because some barbarian tribes settle down, some convert, and some find it harder to sweep down entire regions that are increasingly more effective at resisting them. Cities are growing in size and cathedrals are large enough for all their inhabitants to congregate, and also serve as communal places where problems can be discussed and rules established.<sup>1</sup> The Kings' sons are taught at the Saint-Denis monastery, and this is where Suger becomes a close friend of future King Louis VII, who later entrusts him with the charge of an abbot, and makes him regent of France when leaving for Crusades.

## 2.1 The Gothic Experience of Light

### 2.1.1 What Is an Esthetic Experience?

The English word “esthetic” appears in 1798, from German *ästhetisch* and French *esthétique*, both from Greek *aïsthetikos* “sensitive,” and *aïsthanesthai* “to perceive, to feel.” Kant popularizes it in English with his translation of “the science which treats of the conditions of sensuous perception.”

Some students may have had an esthetic experience before, knowingly or not. If not, suggest they might well have such an experience when they will visit Paris.

Be ready to share your own experience. *On a personal note, it is such an experience of beauty—as I crossed the Carrousel Bridge one evening and saw Paris glowing in the descending sunlight—that brought me to write this book.*

*Light was a crucial part of the experience. I had been looking for books in the Latin Quarter and was walking at a fast pace on the bridge to get back to my mom's. But then, the setting sun brought me to a halt, and, oh, it was so incredibly beautiful. A golden haze permeated everything: the Seine a sparkling sultry river, the Pavillon de Flore a hat outline, the Tour Eiffel a misty twin of itself, and the Grand-Palais a transparent glass roof. It was all there, together, glowing in the same gentle golden hue, absorbing it, reflecting it, and my knees went weak at so much beauty coming together in such harmony.*

*I took a few steps toward the Seine. I had crossed that bridge many times in my Beaux-Arts days, often late at night cold wind sweeping as another river on top of the Seine, but even then, I would stop to spit in the river like millions of Parisians before me. But today it was warm, I could embrace Paris and the Seine with no hindrance, and that's when my heart surged up and my knees gave out. I did not grasp Paris: Paris grasped me, its light entered me and I became one with it.*

*That was the “sensorial” part of the experience. The “emotional” part kicked in, just as powerful and also triggered by light. The sun was setting down, and I knew the short time it would take for day to fall into night, and for the thrilling minutes of acute awareness of the universe and the place I held in it to be over. That evening, the twinge of anxiety that it would become dark no matter what I did, that another day would be irremediably gone, with life clicking away one day at a time, tic tic tic, was coupled with the loss of my city. I had lived in Paris for my first twenty-three years and was now residing in Atlanta with my American husband and our three boys, knowing I likely would never live in Paris again. Nostalgia for beautiful Paris came rushing and I felt so homesick I wanted to scream. I was grieving all my losses at once: motherland, family and my father. I had a bad case of angst: why in the world had I left this place, what a fool I was.*

*That is when the “intellectual” part of the experience stumbled in. It was so bad I had to do something. Jumping in the Seine and lose myself in its beauty was a possibility, but I opted for something less dramatic. If I was powerless about my past, if I could not live in Paris again, I could still live Paris at another level. I decided right then, in the middle of the Carrousel Bridge, I was going to know Paris better than if I had still been living in it. I was going to learn, teach and write about it. Days turn into nights, but just as assuredly, nights always turn into days. Even after the longest, darkest of nights, light always comes back. Light is never really gone; I just don't always see it.*

### 2.1.2 The Anagogical Path to Light: Abbot Suger, *On What Was Done During His Administration, 1144–48*

Some critics have made compelling strides in bringing together architecture and history of ideas during the medieval period, starting with Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, and more recently Dominique Poirel in his “Symbolice et anagogice: l’école de Saint-Victor et la naissance du style gothique.” In *Abbot Suger, on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*, Panofsky also presents Suger’s contribution to Gothic architecture, with the original text in Latin along with his translation and comments. The introduction is excellent (and entertaining), and the part on light is 19–26. See also Duby’s *The Age of the Cathedrals. Art and Society, 980–1420*, and especially chapter 5, “God is Light,” 1130–90.

Observation: The Religious Experience of Beauty  
XXVII *Of the Cast and Gilded Doors*

**What do “bright” and “light” each designate?**

The first two lines, “Whoever thou art, if thou seekest to extol the glory of these doors,/Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work,” have been interpreted as Suger’s response to critics made by his contemporaries for his passion for everything precious.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it seems unlike Suger to tell we should not “marvel” at the gold of the door and its expense, especially since he is otherwise not shy at sharing his raptured esthetic experiences with precious stones. However, by focusing on the “craftsmanship,” Suger differentiates the human skill involved in the door, whether gold or craftsmanship, from a higher meaning that constitutes the “glory” of the doors.<sup>3</sup> He then explains:

**Bright** is the noble work; but being nobly **bright**, the work  
Should **brighten** the minds, so that they may travel, **through the true lights**,  
**To the True Light** where Christ is the true door.

Suger points out to different kinds of brightnesses and lights. “Bright” describes the gold and work done on the door and its human nature. The purpose of the noble work being “bright” is to “brighten the minds so that they may travel”: we are not meant to experience the “True Light” at the door of the cathedral, but to prepare ourselves for the “travel” toward it. The travel itself is made through the “true lights,” which are “true” and as such of a divine nature. Yet they also are many, and God’s multiple manifestations on earth rather than God himself.

On the other hand, the “True Light” in capital letters and singular form indicates God’s oneness, and as such the unique and invisible source of the many lights we can see.

**Which aspect of the Trinity is emphasized when the Christ is said to be the “true door”?**

The Christ himself is not the “True Light” but the “true door,” (echoing “I am the gate” in John 10:9). He belongs to the divine by being one and “true,” but also to the human realm by being a “door,” which is a material, man-made object. This double status of the Christ as human and divine is what defines him as unique: we are only human and God is only divine. The Christ is the door between God and us, and we have to go through him to enter the other side where God is. Unlike Geneviève and Idleness in chapter 1, Jesus is not the guardian of a door, but the door itself.

While God is invisible and no “worthless idols” or images should attempt to represent him,<sup>4</sup> the Christ can be embodied in the human-made doors of the cathedral. Their purpose is to brighten our minds so that we may travel physically through the porch, nave and transept to arrive where the true lights are the most condensed at the chancel. From there we can start on another travel, in an anagogical manner, to the True Light (more about the anagogical manner later on). The doors are only the starting point of a procession that continues in chapter XXVIII below.

*XXVIII Of the Enlargement of the Upper Choir*

**What is the effect of the new light on the church?**

This is the point in history when the Gothic art takes form, and possibly when architecture as a profession comes to being. Here is a client with an innovative program, Suger, who requires his new church to embody his vision. He wants a more open, unified space to reflect God’s oneness. He wants verticality to reflect an upward surge toward heaven. Finally, he wants the light to bathe the inside in its radiance and make palpable his theology of light.<sup>5</sup>

To do so, his master builders cannot reproduce existing modes of construction and have to come up with new, creative ways to use stones. As we will see in Fletcher’s text below, Gothic builders achieve a more unified inside by using the pointed arch that can span greater distances. They achieve verticality by turning the heavy Romanesque walls into lighter structures with ribbed vaults conceived to collect pressures and transfer them to the ground (see the ribbed vaults fig. 2.7). The non-structural part of the wall can then be used for windows so large that it requires the development of new techniques as well.<sup>6</sup> The introduction of stone mullions, the vertical divider between units of a window or door, provides

structural support and permits larger windows. Although colored glass assembled in wooden frames was used in churches as early as the 6C, the new use of lead, which malleability allowed joining pieces of different forms and sizes, enables the stained-glass craft to blossom.

However, Suger does not pause to celebrate the historical event as one would expect. Rather, he starts with an impatient “once,” giving a futuristic vision of what the building should look like when the part in the middle will also have been renovated. Following Dionysius the Areopagite’s idea of the universe oneness, the church should be one volume with as little obstacle as possible.

### **How does the “new light” differ from the “True Light” in XXVII?**

We saw in XXVII how “bright” is associated with the material craftsmanship of the doors and its effect on our human mind, while “True Light” has a higher, divine meaning. In this passage, the church “shines” as the large stained-glass windows allow plenty light to come in. Suger further explains, “For bright is that which is brightly coupled with the bright,” underlining the “coupled” brightness as being of a human nature: the large size of the windows, “coupled” or accentuated by their stained glass.<sup>7</sup>

When adding, “And bright is the noble edifice which is pervaded by the new light,” Suger insists on “pervaded”: light should take over the inner volume and bathe it in its entirety to achieve the proper new light. It is not enough to replace some parts of the old church with new parts: the middle part also needs to be replaced. The “new light” also refers to the light of the New Testament, and like for the new Saint-Denis Basilica, it must entirely replace the Old Testament, rather than simply be added to it.

At this point, Suger has not been able to replace the central part, and his disappointment is visible when he writes, “Which stands enlarged in our time, I, who was Suger, being the leader while it was being accomplished.” He makes his own achievement clear with identifying the “I” as “who was Suger,” but also that the work is not finished, adding his name as if signing a construction contract document defining his exact responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

### XXXIV [On Stained-glass windows]

#### **How does Paul “unveil” Moses’ law?**

The impact of stained-glass windows is hard to imagine today when we take for granted our modern floor-to-ceiling windows. In the 12C, most windows are holes covered with cloth, oiled paper, translucent sheets of mica, or just with shutters. Until the 15C, windows with white glass, or rather greenish pieces of glass

assembled in a diamond pattern, are a rare luxury. So at a time when most houses are dark, what a striking experience of beauty those windows must have provided. When the chancel at the east would light up in the morning, what a comforting sense of God's presence on earth it must have brought, one that man could count on and experience anew every morning, day after day.

Suger indicates how the windows are “urging us onward from the material to the immaterial,” expressing the Middle Ages preoccupation with the afterlife. We saw in chapter 1 how material and immaterial were articulated in *Life of Saint-Denis* with walls defining layers of reality, from the everyday literal world to the invisible after-life world, with in between a figural zone of allegories and symbols.<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Saint-Denis Basilica, allegories are concentrated on the stained-glass windows that form a new type of in-between figural zone. Just in case we would not understand them, Suger takes care of explaining them in verses inscribed in the church and then reproduces them in his treatises with accompanying commentaries.

This is the case of the Tree of Jesse, an essential theme in the 12C as a link between the New and Old Testament (see more about the Tree of Jesse in the Gallery of Kings on the west facade of Notre-Dame). Suger first describes one of its panels, with Paul pushing the wooden arm of a mill, and two prophets with bags on their shoulder: “The Apostle Paul turning a mill, and the Prophets carrying sacks to the mill,” and then provides a verse explaining it,

“By working the mill, Paul, you take the flour from the bran.  
You make known the inner meaning of Moses' law.  
From so many grains is made the true bread without bran,  
The perpetual food of men and angels.”

By working the mill, Paul gets to the inside part of the grain—the flour from which “true bread” can be made, in the same way he renders the inside of Moses' law visible to us. In other words, the law of the Old Testament has “bran” on it that needs to be removed, and this is what Paul in the New Testament does. Suger's explanation is also a meta-explanation of the way stained-glass works as an analogical operator. Like Paul who “take[s] the flour from the bran,” the painted glass sifts “the flour from the bran” of reality by filtering it: we cannot see the real people and trees behind a stained-glass window, which like the bran is left behind. Only the “true lights” pass through, like the flour with which the “true bread” can be made.

Suger further uses the figure of a veil, “What Moses veils, the doctrine of Christ unveils. Those who despoil Moses bare the Law.” The New and Old Testament hold the same Law, the only difference being that the New Testament

unveils it for us. A veil has the particularity of hiding something, while also indicating it (like a locked box indicates something of value inside, and is the first thing a robber or nosy person will violate). But unveiling is tricky, and Suger explains how it requires the help of “the doctrine of Christ.” This is funny: Suger tells us how the New Testament can unveil, yet he must feel this is not enough, as he is compelled to “unveil” the meaning of the allegory for us with a verse written on the glass, which he then further explains in his treatise. You may unveil a veil in an allegory, explain the allegory in a poetic verse, explain the poetic verse in a treatise, but it is never enough. And here I am, attempting to unveil Suger’s unveiling: no matter what you do, you cannot unveil without getting to another veil.

**How may stained-glass windows participate in this process of unveiling? For example, how may they “sift” the outside reality away, and what do they replace it with?**

Stained-glass windows participate in this never-ending process of unveiling. They remove the bran by sifting the outside reality away, and since God is too bright and we can never see him directly, the colored glass makes His presence manifest by replacing the real trees and people with allegories. Although the unveiling is not enough, it does promote a visual and therefore more intellectual communication with the invisible truth. Light shining through stained-glass windows heightens the possibility of a spiritual experience, as Suger does below with the “anagogical manner.”

*XXXIII Concerning the Golden Cross*

**How is the “worthy meditation” induced?**

The Golden Cross is located in the chancel of the new church, at the culminating point of the procession and its most glowing center. This is where Suger’s spiritual experience takes place, starting with his “delight in the beauty of the house of God.” The “house of God” is the new chancel pervaded by the light coming through the stained-glass windows, which moves him into an esthetic experience of “delight.” But while stained-glass windows are conducive to a heightened feeling of happiness, the “worthy meditation” itself happens with “the loveliness of the many-colored gems.” Before Suger, Barbarian leaders were fascinated by translucent materials and the way they caught and refracted light.<sup>10</sup> The meditating value of lavish adornments in the church was also a tradition of the monastic movement. But for Suger and his Dionysian conception of God as light, the way

precious stones play with light is so captivating that it takes his mind away from “external cares” and puts him in what seems to be a hypnotic state.<sup>11</sup>

The worthy meditation brings Suger “to reflect.” To “reflect” in its meaning of “to think, ponder, or meditate” fits well in the context of the worthy meditation, but its literal sense is more intriguing. “To reflect” has the particularity that it can “be cast back as light,” or it can “cast back light”: it can be passive or active—or both. When induced to “reflect,” Suger like the gems can capture light and then emit it back. In doing so, he becomes part of the Theology of light principle, where the divine light creates the universe in a downward burst of luminosity, flooding it all. Depending on the material that absorbs it, it may in turns transmit the divine illumination in a contrary movement of reflection back to the source—the “true lights” going back to the one “True Light” and the invisible God from whom it all proceeds.<sup>12</sup>

### **What do you make of the “strange region” Suger sees himself dwelling in?**

As he looks at the reflection from the gems and becomes part of the backward process leading back to its source, Suger sees himself transported into another place, “in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven.” Like his uncompleted church, he cannot make the full circle back to God, back to absolute light. The “strange region of the universe” may be some kind of purgatory where he will need to go through a process of purification before becoming pure light, and can finally go back to Him (that is how I saw it happen to my Stuart who took ten months after his death to be transformed into pure light—and why I am so interested in “light” to start with). But Suger does not analyze his vision, and rather focuses one more time on the process, “And that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.”

### **Describe Suger’s “anagogical” transportation, and the role light plays in it.**

“Anagogical” comes from Greek “anagoge,” meaning a “climb” or “ascent” upwards. The anagogical is a method of spiritual interpretation of literal statements or events, especially scriptural exegesis that detects allusions to the afterlife. For Suger, the literal event is light going through colored windows and gems. And if God finally appears in the last sentence, it is under the form of his “grace” as the last little push necessary to enter the higher world. God is the all-powerful divine light that impregnates everything, but then it is left to us to travel back to him, with just the help of a little grace in the end.

There is also little saintly or human mediation required in this anagogical process (that is, aside from Suger’s explanations). This absence is striking as it allows

connecting with God directly through his light. This “enlightenment” of the 12C finds its equivalent in Pierre Abélard’s approach of the dialectical method where he leaves each individual to come to his own interpretation, as we will see further on in this chapter.

### 2.1.3 Flexible Gothic Arch: Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 1896

Interaction: Gothic Architecture

**Fill in the key words in the following extracts of Fletcher’s text:**

[1] The Gothic of the thirteenth century throughout Europe was slowly evolved from Romanesque architecture and is mainly distinguished by the introduction and general use of the **pointed arch** [...]. This feature, in conjunction with **buttresses and lofty pinnacles**, gives to the style the **aspiring** tendency, which has been regarded as symbolic of the **religious aspirations** of the period.

[Gothic architects] by employing **small stones** laid in shallow courses with thick mortar joints, endeavored to secure the greatest amount of **elasticity compatible with stability**. The Gothic masons, throwing the rein on the neck of experiment, **utilized stone to its utmost capacity**. They heaped up stone in towers that, rising above the lofty roofs of nave and transepts, tapered upwards in **slender spires embroidered with lace-like tracery**. They suspended it overhead in ponderous vaults, ornamented so as to seem mere **gossamer webs pierced by cunning pendants**, which pleased the fancy of the fifteenth century, and which in reality sustain the very vaults from which they appear to hang. Finally, emboldened by success, they even ventured to cut granular stone **as thin as fibrous wood**.

[2] The stability of a Gothic cathedral depends upon the proper adjustment of **thrust and counter-thrust**. [...] Whereas in Roman buildings the buttressing system is often an integral part of the enormously thick walls, which rise up to weight the haunches of barrel vaults or domes, in a Gothic building the wall system consists of pieces of wall, or **buttresses**, at right angles to the building, to take the collected pressures of the ribbed vault. This structural contrivance of transmitting the accumulated pressures to the ground is known as a “**flying buttress**.” The entire structure consists of a skeleton of **piers, buttresses, arches, and ribbed vaulting**, all held in equilibrium by the combination of oblique and vertical forces neutralizing each other, as is clearly shown by the illustrations which explain the constructive principles (p. 369). The walls were thus merely required **to enclose and not to support the structure**, and indeed they principally consisted of **glazed windows with vertical mullions and traceried heads**.

[3] Gothic architecture, in common with Greek, relies on the **evident truthfulness of its structural features**, which in both styles are component parts of the artistic scheme.

Although most of the forms were founded primarily on **structural necessity**, others were the expression of artistic invention; thus the spire fulfilled no structural requirement, but it served as a symbol and formed an outward and visible expression of the **religious aspirations** of the time and directed the thoughts of men **heavenwards**.

[4] As a result of the development of the Gothic system of buttresses, walls became less necessary as **supports**; but were naturally retained to **enclose the building and protect it against the elements**. Another step in the evolution of the style was made possible by the invention of **painted glass**, which was forthwith used to form brilliant transparent pictures in the ever-recurring windows which were enclosed under the pointed vaults, which had, as already explained, been originally adopted for constructive reasons.

## Recap: Principles of Gothic Architecture

**Materials:** [1] Gothic architects use small stones inlaid in shallow courses with thick mortar joints, for the greatest amount of elasticity compatible with stability. The masons heap up the stones in towers tapering in slender spires (see pinnacles in figs. 2.10 and T2.1), suspend it in vaults ornamented so as to look like a web, and cut granular stone as thin as fibrous wood. The Gothic masons, throwing the rein on the neck of experiment, **utilize stone to its utmost capacity**.

**Structure:** [1] Gothic architecture is foremost distinguished by the introduction and general use of the Gothic (or ogival, or pointed) arch, in conjunction with buttresses and lofty pinnacles. [1] The thrust comes from the collected pressures of the nave vaulting, which are downward owing to their weight and oblique owing to the arched form of the vault. The counter-thrusts come from the dead weight of the outer roof and by arches being retained by an outer line of massive buttresses weighted by pinnacles. The buttresses are pieces of wall at right angles to the building, taking the form of “flying buttresses” at the higher part of the building.

[2] **The Gothic (or ogival, or pointed) arch allows a greater flexibility in construction, as it can be adjusted in height and width to fit any span needed in a given vaulting system.** On the other hand, the Romanesque arch being a semi-circle does not have this flexibility, and a problem occurs when two arches of different width intersect in a vault. To keep the same height, they must compensate the height of the smaller arch by setting it higher (like in fig. 2.11 B), or compensate the longer side of the rectangle with an extra wall surface.

The other structural advantage is that the pointed arch channels the weight onto the bearing piers or columns at a steep angle. This enables architects to raise vaults much higher than was possible in Romanesque architecture.

[2] **The entire structure consists of a skeleton of piers, buttresses, arches, and ribbed vaulting,**<sup>13</sup> all held in equilibrium by the combination of oblique and vertical forces neutralizing each other.

**Relationship between form and structure:** [1] In Greek architecture, forms depend on the proportions given by the repetition of the columns and horizontal entablatures. On the other hand, **in Gothic architecture, most forms are founded primarily on structural necessity.** This Gothic esthetic will be reversed during Renaissance when architects such as Alberti look back to antiquity and their sense of beauty independent of its structural necessities.

**Walls and windows:** [3] The balancing act of thrust and counter-thrust has great repercussions. While the Romanesque church uses a thick wall on its periphery to counter the weight of its building (see Saint-Germain-des-prés), **the Gothic Cathedral uses buttresses perpendicular to the periphery of the building. The outside wall is not required anymore for support and can be open to the outside with stained-glass windows filling as much of the empty space as possible.** The Sainte-Chapelle is a magnificent example of such a use. In modern architecture, steel and reinforced concrete have similarly been used to support the building without relying on walls for support, therefore freeing the outside wall, used as a “curtain wall.”

**Esthetic experience:** Abbot Suger best expresses the Gothic esthetic experience, with the ability of stained-glass windows to transform physical light into “true lights.” However when Fletcher writes how the spire “served as a symbol and formed an outward and visible expression of the religious aspirations of the time and directed the thoughts of men heavenwards,” he further indicates how **the verticality of the Gothic church embodies the upward lift of a spiritual experience.**

**Underline aspects that strike you as specific to Gothic Architecture, and use them to help you analyze buildings of the period.**

**Materials:** Gothic architects utilize stone to its utmost capacity.

**Structure:** The structure consists of a skeleton of piers, buttresses, arches, and ribbed vaulting. The Gothic arch allows a greater flexibility in construction and the possibility to unify the church inside.

**Relationship between form and structure:** most forms are founded primarily on structural necessity.



Fig. T2.1. Notre-Dame: flying buttresses and pinnacles. The top green statue is Saint-Thomas, impersonated by Viollet-le-Duc turning around to check his spire.

**Walls and windows:** The structure is held in equilibrium with massive buttresses, pinnacles and flying buttresses that are perpendicular to the periphery of the building. Thick outside walls are not required for support any longer, and stained-glass windows can fill as much of the empty space as possible.

**Esthetic experience:** The verticality of the Gothic church with its pointed arch, buttresses and lofty pinnacles, embodies the upward lift of a spiritual experience. Stained-glass windows transform physical light into “true lights.”

## 2.2 Île de la Cité, East Side: Religious Power

### 2.2.1 Gothic Notre-Dame, 1163–1245

Observation: Jean Fouquet, Leaf from the *Hours of Etienne Chevalier*, *Right Hand of God Driving Out Demons*, ca. 1452–60  
*Right Hand of God Driving out Demons* is part of Jean Fouquet’s forty-seven surviving illuminations from the *Hours of Etienne Chevalier*, commissioned by

Etienne Chevalier, treasurer of King Charles VII. Fouquet revolutionizes the art of miniature by making a full-page picture and reducing the text to a single line at the bottom of the page in capital letters, “Deus in adiutorium meum intende domine ad adiutum.” This is the opening line of the evening prayer at vespers, *Deus in adiutorium meum intende*, with the response: *Domine ad adjuvandum me festina* (respectively, “O God, come to my assistance” and “O Lord, make haste to help me”), and the first verse of Psalm 70. This line implores the assistance of God against distractions in prayer, and when repeated three times before dispersing to their several occupations, the “Deus in adiutorium” emphasizes the union of prayer and work.

**Identify the buildings: in the foreground, the gate in the Philippe Auguste Wall and the Tower of Nesle parapet (where the men are kneeling). In the middle ground: the Pont Saint-Michel and the Petit Châtelet Fortress behind, the roof of the Hôtel-Dieu, the tower of the Evêché and Notre-Dame. In the background, the Saint-Geneviève Mount. On which bank are the praying men located?**

The piece of conical roof to the right belongs to the gate in the Philippe Auguste Wall by the Tower of Nesle, located on the Rive Gauche across the Seine from the Louvre. The group kneeling in prayers is on top of the wall in between the towers of the gate, with a parapet in front of them. The elevated location gives a bird’s eye view of the Île de la Cité with Notre-Dame dominating it, and although not an elaborately built perspective, the multiple layers give a sense of depth. The foreground is formed with the kneeling group and the Nesle Gate; the second plan features the Île de la Cité; the third plan shows Saint-Geneviève Mount’s green slopes, and further away, another mount in a hazy blue color. Even though the view is the same as the one we studied in 1317 *Life of Saint-Denis* (chapter 1), the layers of depth make this part of the 1460 illumination more realistic and recognizable to a modern eye.<sup>14</sup>

The full-page size also allows an amount of details unknown until then: the Seine ripples and mirrors buildings, especially the pillars of the Pont Saint-Michel on the right. As we saw in *Life of Saint-Denis*, gates defended bridges and this is the case of the Petit Châtelet visible behind the Pont Saint-Michel. The Petit Châtelet is rebuilt in stones by Charles V in 1369, used as a prison in 1382, and demolished in 1782 (and clearly recognizable in the 1615 Merian Map as well).

The tower to the left of the Pont Saint-Michel is part of its gate on the island. Notre-Dame dominates the island, with in front of it the Rue Neuve-Notre-Dame where books are produced, the roof of the Hôtel-Dieu, and the tower of

the Evêché to its side. The bird's eye view displays Notre-Dame's rose window, as one eye looking at us much like André Breton describes it (see chapter 9). Notre-Dame's stones are darker than those of the buildings surrounding it: in 1460, Notre-Dame is already 200-year-old.

A crenelated wall protects the island from invasion, but also serves as a retaining wall with the black marks showing levels reached by the Seine flooding. The buildings on the island are elevated in comparison to the green area below, as it is now with the Square du Vert-Galant. The trees in that area are small, suggesting they date from a flooding that took place a decade back, and their light green color gives a fresh, crisp look to the scene: it is spring in Paris.

**Describe the scene with men in the front kneeling in an intercessory prayer. What is God's answer? How is His presence made visible?**

However spring-like and happy the view of Paris, it is threatened by a flock of monsters hovering in the blue sky. Things may seem harmonious on the surface, but only prayers can help keep temptation and sinning away. To this effect, the men on the terrace kneel into an intercessory prayer asking God for help, "Deus in adiutorium meum intende domine ad adiutum." We indicated how the desire for mediation between a human earthly world and the invisible divine prevails in the verticality of the Gothic church. Fouquet's elevated view displays Notre-Dame's domineering height over all other buildings, tall enough to reach the sky and serve as a man-made bridge between earth and Heaven. We will see more intercessory prayers in art with the "Notre-Dame Woman" in the central portal of Notre-Dame, and in literature when Abélard asks Héloïse to pray for him.

God answers this intercessory prayer with His right hand piercing through the surface of the celestial vault. The baptism of Jesus in Mark 1:10–11 shows likewise a sky opening up, "As Jesus was coming out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" The heaven is "torn open," which as suggested by my dear friend Bill Mallard is a violent gesture. Yet at the same time, the spirit descends like a dove, which is gentle and beautiful rather than threatening.

In the *Right Hand of God*, we likely have a river, although it is the Seine rather than the Jordan. We likely have a heaven, beautifully rendered in a single, abstract arch at the very top (unlike the nine vaults in *Life of Saint Denis*). This heaven is also open, but unlike in Mark's baptism of Jesus, the hand of God has gone through it without apparent effort, only causing a few ripples on the

celestial vault. God extends an index and sends the Holy Spirit in the form of a few bright rays of light, which is funny as it is enough to send the demons scurrying away so fast they leave some of their ashes behind. They are as cowardly as they are ugly.

While Fouquet's demons have the composite nature of monsters, combining wings, tails and claws, his 1460 Godly hand is human-like in its simplicity. It is also an accurate rendering of a hand, much like Michelangelo's 1509 right hand of God in the Sistine Chapel. The circular ripples it forms in the sky bring an analogy with the water of the Seine below that shimmers and ripples as well. For the modern scientific man, this analogy brings to mind other kinds of waves—acoustic, seismic, electromagnetic, or even quantum mechanical ones—and we are not surprised to see waves in the sky, but rather delighted by Fouquet's intuition.

Finally, the vault of the sky is a reverse image of the Seine. We cannot see through the vault like we cannot see through the Seine water when it reflects images like a mirror. Even though invisible to us most of the time, we know there are fish in the water, like we know God is there in heaven. We just cannot see Him. Like the kneeling group in the foreground, we must have faith in Him, so that he will keep demons away. Because if demons can be scared away, it is only momentarily and they will come back relentlessly tempting us to sin.

**Compare with the 1317 illumination of Moine Yves, *Life of Saint-Denis* in chapter 1: the view of Paris, the role of the praying people, and the vaulted sky with heaven and hell.**

While displaying similar views of the Île de la Cité and its bridges, the 1460 *Right Hand of God* shows realistic qualities such as depth and accuracy, and one can tell the great perspective of the 1498 Da Vinci's Last Supper is only forty years away (see chapter 3). God's hand has a human appearance; the Holy Spirit is shown as rays of light, and Notre-Dame as a real building that bridges between earth and Heaven. The analogical space which takes the best part of *Life of Saint-Denis* is reduced to a few ripples in the sky, making a subtle analogy with the water below, as two mediums that although transparent can also veil what stands beyond. The demons belong to that layer of sky, although incongruous with the spring scenery. No layering of walls and gates separate men from an inaccessible immaterial Heaven, but only a celestial vault possibly as permeable and porous as water. It may mean Heaven is not as far away as we thought. It may mean Heaven is already among us, reflected by the beauty surrounding us on earth, in places as perfect in their beauty as Heaven—and that would be springtime Paris.

Drawing: Notre-Dame West Facade and Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, 1831.

**With the help of the drawing in figure 2.14, sketch the facade of Notre-Dame, starting with a square, adding the towers above, and respecting its tripartite composition. Label it with elements given in Victor Hugo’s text.**



Fig. T2.2. Notre-Dame: west facade, 1200–50. The Great Gallery being “transparent” in between the two towers brings two simultaneous readings of the facade.

**“Three doorways with their pointed arches.”**

Like in the Saint-Denis Basilica, the three doorways of Notre-Dame stand for the Trinity, the central one emphasizing the human aspect of the Christ.<sup>15</sup> However

Victor Hugo does not differentiate the three portals, and indeed, they look alike with their pointed arches, two doors separated by a stone mullion in the middle, and their multitude of sculptures. The middle portal is only slightly bigger, as we will see in details below.

**“The border embroidered and fretted with twenty-eight royal niches,” which is the Gallery of the Kings. Why does Victor Hugo speak of niches instead of statues of kings?**

Victor Hugo speaks of “royal niches” instead of the statues of the kings: the statues were pulled down during the French Revolution and the niches are empty when Hugo writes his novel in 1831. Thought at the time to represent the French kings, they actually display the twenty-eight kings of Judea and Israel cited in the gospel of Matthew 1:1–16.<sup>16</sup> These historical figures from the Old Testament constitute the royal lineage of the Christ, son of David, and as his flesh-and-blood ancestors, they give him a place in a human family and emphasize his humanity.

“Embroidered and fretted” insists on the delicate aspect of the stonework, while the “border” indicates that it forms a homogeneous line. Looking at the facade, the border indeed forms a continuous horizontal, reinforced by the hand-rail above. It ties the three vertical parts together and gives a sense of stability to the facade.

**“The immense central stained-glass window, flanked by its two lateral windows, like the priest by the deacon and subdeacon,” which is the west rose window. Look for other circular shapes at that level that tie the rose window with the other pointed windows.**

Hugo describes the level of the rose window, which he calls “the immense central stained-glass window,” underlining with “immense” and “central” its crucial role in the facade, as we will see in details below. “Like the priest by the deacon and subdeacon,” is a comparison between the facade and the Catholic Church organization that emphasizes the importance of a priest over other ministries, as well as insist on the primordial role of the rose window in the facade.

The two lateral windows also tie this middle level to the bottom level, as window-version of the portals below, showing the same features of a pointed arch and double opening divided by a stone mullion. On the other hand, the circular shape of the rose window differs dramatically from the pointed arch design, yet its round motif is repeated as mini-rosettes in the tympanum of the two lateral windows, tying the three windows of this level together. Although blind, those

mini-roses have a wheel pattern like the central rose, with six spokes and twelve lobes on the periphery. Furthermore, a decoration in the shape of three interpenetrating circles, also known as “clover” or blind trefoils, appears at the top corners of the three parts, which makes it a total of six on that level. This ternary composition ties the rose window to the rest of the facade while conserving its unique status.

**“The lofty and light gallery of openwork clover arcades supporting a heavy platform on its slender pillars,” which is the Great Gallery. Notice how the central part of this gallery is open to the sky, and brings an ambiguous reading of the facade, as a square with towers above, or two equal rectangles.**

The “lofty and light gallery,” known as the Great Gallery, carries on the idea of the Gallery of the Kings of forming a continuous horizontal and tying the three vertical parts together. The “clover arcades” repeat the motif of the three-leaf clovers of the level below, and in that sense tie those two levels together as well. The windows at the two sides are similar in size from the ones below, although each further divided in two so that they appear more slender. The central part of the gallery differs in that it opens to the sky (fig. T2.2).

“Lofty and light” also points out to a stone work so skilled that it makes the stone appear to be diaphanous like lace. This transparency of the great gallery is essential in the design of Notre-Dame, as it brings multiple readings of the facade. When counted as part of the facade, the great gallery makes it look square, which as a simple perfect shape brings stability to the facade. When focused on the transparent aspect of the great gallery, and not “counting it in,” it then makes the towers as tall as the rest of the facade (precisely true when counting the little stair-towers at the very top), which divides the facade in two equal rectangles sitting on top of each other. However, we never see it either way, but both simultaneously—an ambiguity we will see to be central to cubism (chapter 8).<sup>17</sup> It is truly breathtaking to see “transparency” in an architecture of stone!

The unique role of the Great Gallery of Notre-Dame, and the transition it creates between the main building and the towers while belonging to both at the same time can best be seen when compared with 1140 Saint-Denis Basilica (the north tower was dismantled following poor repairs in 1840),<sup>18</sup> and 1250 Chartres Cathedral. They both emphasize their verticality, “lacking” the interplay with horizontals that brings what Hugo calls a “tranquil grandeur,” which is the sense of balance and harmony unique to Notre-Dame.

**“The two dark and massive towers with their slate porches.” Notice that those towers have no spires or steeples. How would having those change the facade? Label the twin towers and the spire Viollet-le-Duc placed instead at the transept crossing in the 19C.**

The two towers reproduce the window motif with their stone mullion division, although taller in proportion, that ties them to the other levels. Victor Hugo speaks of their “slated porches,” which cover the top of the towers as barely perceptible low-pitched roofs. Unlike other cathedrals built in that time period, the towers of Notre-Dame have no steeples or spires. When restoring Notre-Dame in the 19C, Viollet-le-Duc thinks of adding them, but then decides against it to keep the focus on the rose window like his medieval predecessors had done. While this is a good-enough reason, one can also see how it would dissolve the playful interplay between verticals and horizontals.

Instead, Viollet-le-Duc adds a spire at the intersection point of the cross formed by the nave and transept—not without a touch of humor, when Geoffroy-Dechaume gives Saint-Thomas, patron of architects, Viollet-le-Duc’s features, turning around to check out his creation (fig. T2.1).<sup>19</sup> Looking at the facade, the spire fits in the space between the two towers that would otherwise be empty. The original spire of Notre-Dame is visible in Fouquet’s *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons*, pointing up to the vaulted dome of heaven in a reverse image of God’s hand pointing down to earth in response. I agree with Viollet-le-Duc’s contested addition: the spire is what connects to a beyond above in an otherwise down-to-earth facade.

**Look at the composition of the facade, and explain in which way it is a “symphony of stone” as expressed by Hugo.**

While Hugo distinguishes “five gigantic stories” that emphasize the horizontality of the facade, the vertical lines of the four buttresses and two towers are just as essential, as they divide the facade into three equal parts, in a ternary composition emblematic of the Trinity. Thus the west facade is conceived vertically for God with the verticals pulling heavenward, while horizontally it is built for men, the horizontals compressing the edifice down toward earth. As a result, the interplay of vertical and horizontal lines brings a sense of balance and harmony unique to Notre-Dame, which Cowen describes as the “tidiest” of all church facades.<sup>20</sup>

Victor Hugo publishes *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* in 1831, shortly after Beethoven’s death in 1827. Symphonies still assume a prominent place in 19C concert life, and it is not surprising Victor Hugo would use it as a metaphor to describe Notre-Dame’s facade. For example, Beethoven’s 5th Symphony (opening

with the distinctive four-note “short-short-short-long” motif), is composed of four movements, each with their own themes, undergoing at turns exposition, development, expansion, alternation and/or recapitulation. The large scale and highly structured musical composition of a symphony nicely mirror the architectural composition of Notre-Dame. As a whole, and much like a sonata, the facade consists of an expanded ternary form, consistently carried through in different ways as we saw in the three portals becoming windows at the other levels, but also in its most minute details of mini-rosette or three-leaf clovers, pulling the facade in a united whole. Similar elements are used over and over again, but “played” in different ways—much like in a symphony of stone. Furthermore, and as we will see with the portal of the Last Judgment, the intricacy of each element with its own theme and flourishing sculptures gives it its own “movement,” while still remaining a part of a highly structured facade.

But mostly, it may be in the ambiguous nature of the Notre-Dame facade that lays its most musical aptitude. We saw how the great gallery’s transparency permits a double reading of the facade, and how the lack of pointed roofs on the towers undermines a clearly vertical design. This tension between vertical and horizontal readings is what brings forth the possibility of infinite variations, in a playful interplay of a symphonic magnitude unique to Notre-Dame.

### **2.2.2 Comparison of Romanesque Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 990–1014, and Gothic Notre-Dame, 1163–1245**

Among the few Romanesque churches still existing today in Paris, Saint-Pierre de Montmartre (1147) is the last remnant of the abbey of Benedictine women built on the hill of Montmartre. Saint-Martin-des-Champs (1130–1147), at the north of Beaubourg on Rue Saint-Martin, is given to the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers during the Revolution, and its choir is a precursor of Gothic architecture that may have influenced Abbot Suger in Saint-Denis. Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre (1165–70), built on the foundations of the 6C oratory dedicated to Saint-Julien l’hospitalier (or “le pauvre”—see the short story by Gustave Flaubert), is started two years after Notre-Dame, and although Romanesque in its heavy appearance, goes through many restorations in the Gothic and Renaissance styles. Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois, with a 12C Romanesque tower and otherwise rebuilt in the 13C Gothic style, becomes the king’s parish church when the Valois move to the Louvre in the 14C. The bells of Saint-Germain l’Auxerrois ring on August 24, 1572, to signal the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre when thousands of Protestants are killed (see chapter 3).

## Interaction: Comparing Romanesque Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Gothic Notre-Dame

**Identify the wall systems in each plan: massive walls around the periphery of Saint-Germain, and buttresses perpendicular to the periphery in Notre-Dame.**

In the Romanesque church, walls are massive and continuous on the periphery, with just a few semi-circular arched windows. In the Gothic church, buttresses perpendicular to the periphery of the church replace the walls, while large windows take the whole space in between the buttresses.

In the case of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, some buttresses are visible on the outside of the wall to reinforce it where the pressures coming down from the vaults are the strongest. In Notre-Dame, the spaces between the buttresses are occupied by side-chapels (added later), and the stained-glass windows are above—and not as spectacular as in the Sainte-Chapelle where there are no side-chapels and windows take up the whole height (see figs. T2.6–7).

**Examine how in the Notre-Dame plan, the different components are more connected and integrated with each other, especially in the porch, side-aisles and transept crossing.**

The plans of the two churches are composed of the same elements, but while conceived as distinct entities in Saint-Germain, they are unified in one single volume in Notre-Dame. This is particularly true of the porch. In the case of Saint-Germain, it has its own independent volume with thick walls built to support the big bell-tower. In the case of Notre-Dame, the porch is fused with the narthex and of the same width as the church. Its thick walls support the two towers absorbed in the general verticality of the cathedral.

The side-aisles are also double in Notre-Dame (please note that the two plans are at a different scale, Notre-Dame being twice as big as Saint-Germain), and indistinct from the ambulatory in size and treatment, providing a free-flowing path all around the church. Transept and nave intersect each other in the same way in both plans, forming a cross that embodies the cross of the Christ. A clearly separate volume in Saint-Germain, the transept is still distinctive in Notre-Dame with its formidable height and the roses that enlighten its ends. Yet the transept arms align with side-aisles and side chapels, and barely project to the outside with porches. The chancel and high altar face east toward Jerusalem in both churches, but the radiating chapels that have their own curved walls in Saint-Germain, are added in between the buttresses in Notre-Dame in the 13C as an integral part of the general plan.

Although Romanesque and Gothic churches are composed of the same elements, in Notre-Dame they are part of one single homogeneous volume, which as we saw with Suger responds to the desire of embodying God's oneness. It is truly remarkable to see in the plan how using the flexible pointed arch and the lighter structure of ribbed vaults has permitted the geometrical interpenetration and spatial integration of all the elements.

**Compare the outside aspect of the edifices. How unified are the different elements, such as the bell towers and windows?**

The implication of the pointed arch as an element of unification in the Gothic church is visible in the outside appearance as well, even though Saint-Germain is much altered. Flying buttresses are added for support at the same time as those of Notre-Dame, an outer doorway added in 1607 hides the original porch, and the presbytery to the right is affixed in the 18C. Also, only one tower remains of the original three, topped in the 19C with a roof in the shape of a crown by Victor Baltard, the architect of Les Halles structures (fig. T2.3). But even then, the last tower left in place is independent of the volume of the church and dominates it.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the two towers of Notre-Dame are an integral part of the facade on two third of its height, and it would be impossible to remove one without altering its composition.

The window openings also differ. In Saint-Germain, they are "holes" in the mass of the wall, and semi-circular at the top. In the facade of Notre-Dame, the "window systems" occupy the whole space in between the buttresses and are pointed in shape. However, the front facade of Notre-Dame is quite massive with its wall thickness needed to support the towers. A view of the chancel of Notre-Dame showing its flying buttresses gives a better idea of how the walls are reduced to a structure in stone, rather than massive walls like at Saint-Germain (fig. T2.1).<sup>22</sup> One may nevertheless notice that although diaphanous in its Gothic structure, the front facade of Notre-Dame with its towers webbed into its strong horizontals, looks somewhat heavier and more earth-bound than Romanesque Saint-Germain with its roaring, sky-reaching tower. This is due to a careful interplay of verticals and horizontals, as we saw with Victor Hugo's description.

**2.2.3 Notre-Dame's Portal of the Last Judgment:  
Hoffbauer, *Paris à travers les âges*, 1998**

The 1230 central portal depicts the Last Judgment when Jesus "separate[s] the people one from another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25: 31–46). It is also based on the Book of Revelation in its depiction



Fig. T2.3. Saint-Germain-des-Près: 1014 bell tower with 19C crown, 1606 outer doorway and 18C presbytery in the foreground.

of Hell, in which John describes the dreadful apocalypse with a myriad of monstrous beasts.

Hoffbauer explains how the cathedral is a book where the least lettered can find a “materialized” lesson. When books are little available and literacy minimal, sculptures and paintings serve as a Poor Man’s Bible, but also they make the “word become flesh” in a more palpable way. In the Last Judgment, the materialized lesson shows the “Way to Salvation” through two revelations. The first one presents humankind’s bent to sin illustrated in the medallions of opposing Vices and Virtues in the portal embrasures, and how we can avoid sinning with the help of the teaching Jesus in the trumeau piece between the two doors. The second revelation tells the need to turn to Jesus to receive God’s grace, and there is another Jesus at the top of the tympanum, showing the nail holes in his palms to tell us how he suffered death on the cross to absolve our sins, and that we will find grace by following him. As Crusaders discover material traces of the Christ in the Holy Land, he takes an increasingly important role in the Trinity, as the human tie with an otherwise invisible God.

### Observation: The Way to Salvation

**See how Virtues are shown with sitting women holding a medallion of an animal or an object symbolizing a virtue, and Vices in little scenes where a person acts up a vice in an allegory (fig. 2.17). How does it differentiate men from animals? Compare with the allegories of *The Romance of the Rose*.**

The medallions of Virtues and Vices are located below the apostles, at eye level so that one will readily see them when entering the cathedral. Like Abélard leaving individuals to come up with their own interpretation in his *Sic and Non*, Vices and Virtues are juxtaposed, leaving us to exercise our free will and reason.

On the left side, from left to right, Virtues on top and corresponding Vices below are:

- Humility (dove), versus Pride (a man falling from a fiery horse).
- Prudence (serpent), versus Madness (a distraught man erring in the countryside).
- Purity (salamander), versus Injustice.
- Charity (sheep), versus Miserliness (a woman by a chest).
- Hope (cross and banner), versus Despair (a man piercing himself with a sword).
- Faith (cross), versus Impiety (a man adoring an idol).

On the right side, from left to right, Virtues on top and corresponding Vices below are:

- Courage (passing Lion), versus Cowardliness (a man running away from a rabbit abandoning his sword).
- Patience (oxen), versus Anger (a woman about to strike a monk).
- Gentleness (lamb), versus Harshness (a woman pushing a servant over).
- Peace (olive branch), versus discord (a drunk man and woman fighting).
- Obedience (kneeling camel), versus Revolt (a man insulting his bishop).
- Perseverance (crown), versus Inconstancy (a monk leaving his monastery).

The difference between Virtues and Vices is expressed in terms of symbol and allegory. Virtues are shown in bas-reliefs with sitting women holding a medallion of an animal or an object symbolizing a virtue. Virtues are given to animals as a birthright: it is in the nature of a lamb to be gentle, therefore a lamb is a symbol of gentleness. On the other hand, man is not given such qualities as a birthright. For better and worse, he has free will and can through his actions lean toward Vices or Virtues for which he will be judged. Unlike animals, he can choose to do either and it is those actions that are acted out in the allegorical little scenes of the medallions.

In the *Romance of the Rose*, Vices are presented on the outside wall as excluded from the Garden of Pleasure. Those Vices were only bad in respect to Love. In the portal of Notre-Dame, Vices and Virtues are displayed like in a book open at 135 degrees (instead of the ninety degrees at the BnF library as we will see in chapter 10), in cartoonish moral panels that make it easier for a man to choose. But God is good: he sent Jesus who can teach us right from wrong, and would we choose poorly, intercede for us.

**Describe the Teaching Christ, situated between the two doors (fig. 2.18). In which way is he more human than divine? What is the Apostles' role?**

The Teaching Jesus consists of a trumeau figure in between the two doors, with more medallions placed vertically on either side picturing the parable of the ten virgins. This parable is popular in the Middle Ages, showing how the wise virgins who are prepared with oil in their lamp for the bridegroom's arrival are rewarded, while the foolish virgins who at the last minute have to go get some oil, do not make it in time and are excluded (Matthew 25:1–13). In the Last Judgment portal, the five wise virgins stand on the left side with the open gates of Heaven on top, and the five foolish ones on the right side with the closed gates of Heaven on

top. The message is clear: nobody knows the hour of judgment, and we should be prepared for it at any time, so that gates of Heaven will be open for us. Jesus right there in between the two doors can teach us to prepare for it.

The teaching Jesus stands on bas-reliefs of allegories of liberal arts taught in the 12C in the University of Paris, the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic), and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music). Like Abélard and the masters of the urban schools, Jesus dispenses the benefit of a rational thinking. On the other hand, the round medallion below him is Theology with its head in the clouds, indicating Truth is not readily available on earth and the need for Jesus as the mediator between below and above. He displays his power against evil as he stands on the aspic and umbilicus (ombilic), symbols of death and sin: he can erase our sins with his sacrifice on the cross, and overcome death by offering the resurrection to those following his teaching. Jesus also holds the scriptures, reminding us he is himself the Word made flesh (John 1:14). But however powerful, the trumeau figure is most of all a Teaching Jesus.

Jesus holds his right hand up (and an index that has been broken), as a teacher calling for his students' attention. He also stands above like a university professor in his chair, his higher status and stern look imposing obedience to his followers. But he is also a handsome young man with striking features that would make him attractive today like it did back then. This is a human Jesus, with no sign of a divine nature except for his halo, but even then it is a small disk with little decoration that appears to be part of the wall rather than his person. The teaching Jesus is the one we are to follow while on earth, and his lesson is that the spirit has to be open to the revelation of the bible he holds, but also to reason and the way we exercise our mind. We may not be gentle lambs, but we can choose between vices and virtues and regulate the disorders of our life.

The twelve apostles at the sides of Jesus are:

- Left side, from right to left: Bartholomew (knife), Simon (book), Jake the young (stick), Andrew (cross), John (chalice) and Peter (keys).<sup>23</sup>
- On the right side, from left to right: Paul (two-edged sword), Jake the elder (shell), Thomas (ruler), Philip (cross), Judas (stake) and Matthew (book).

In the bible, the apostles have no religious background and are taught an intensive discipleship course by Jesus; and then, just like us, they often do not understand the lesson and Jesus has to come up with explicit explications (that are much useful for the rest of us). In the Last Judgment portal, the apostles are comparable in size to Jesus, dressed like him and have a similar halo in a simple disk form.

Trained by Jesus, they have become teachers of their own, and while they may not carry the word like Jesus does, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote the gospels, and we are to follow their teaching.

**In the archivolt to the left of the call to judgment lintel, identify the patriarchs: Isaac, Jacob and Abraham holding three small souls on his laps (fig. 2.19). Also identify the rewards of Heaven in the New Jerusalem and the way people act.**

Six archivolt surround the tympanum. The first two arches are filled with angels and cherubs, forty-five of them, leaning over the sky's handrail in anticipation, clapping hands and singing. I believe they are waiting for their parents and siblings, cheerfully encouraging them to look up at Jesus and find their way to them. This is another comforting image, as grieving parents will get to see their beloved children again. The other arches include patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, doctors and virgins, all assembled as in 1 Corinthians 12 to form one body—what is called the Community of Saints in the Apostles' Creed. And yes, this Community of Saints is looking after our children, including my Stuart, until we die and are with them again. The very outer layer is a garland of plants from the Ile-de-France region, and no, I do not believe it means we will be vegetarian in Heaven.

The archivolt to the left of the call to judgment lintel presents a view of Heaven. An angel welcomes the new souls, pointing to Abraham the father who sweetly holds three small souls on his lap. Two other patriarchs sit to his right, his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob, who both carry flowering palm. Next to them, four groups of three people are looking out from what could be towers (some are crenelated) of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:1–4, where “there will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain.” Indeed, they all have happy smiles and the relaxed features of those in blissful peace (and thankful not to be in Hell). They also look alike with their crown, simple clothes and curly hair, like good sheep as opposed to the goats of Hell.

**Identify terrors of Hell represented in the archivolt to the right of the call to judgment lintel (fig. 2.20): cauldron of boiling oil (Revelation 21:8), Death riding a horse (Revelation 6), demons carrying souls away, black horse rider (Revelation 6)? Can you make out the last two arches, with punishment for sexual perversion, and then a fusion between monsters and damned souls? What is the message given to the beholder at this point?**

The archivolt to the right presents Hell in much more intricate scenes. The scene in the arch closest to the lintel shows a cauldron of boiling oil as the “fiery lake of

burning sulfur” of Revelation 21:8 where “the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all the liars” have their second death. In the 1200s, cauldrons are used on assailants of the Parisian walls and evoke the fear of Barbarian Invasions. A demon pushes a man inside head first (there is another man waiting upside down above), shoveling him down with a fork so that he might not burn himself, and pushing the rest of his body with his right hand. Although his face shows signs of great pain, the man still struggles by holding on to the cauldron lip. But we know he will not escape his fate, as two bullfrogs gnaw at his hands (animals apparently considered ugly enough not to need a monstrous transformation).

In the second arch to the right of the cauldron, Death, the fourth horseman from Revelation 6 riding a pale horse and killing with “sword, famine and plague,” is shown as a naked, emaciated woman, with hanging breasts and ragged hair. She rides blindfolded, unaware the rider at her back has fallen upside down. He is so thin he may be dead from famine, while the puzzling extrusion on his belly may be bowels he is losing, or a bloody diarrhea coming from the plague.<sup>24</sup>

The third arch presents three demons carrying three damned souls away. The struggle is such that one can hardly make them apart. The demon on top of this amalgam of body parts grimaces with pleasure, in great contrast with the sad face of a crowned man below him, who has put a loving hand on the body of someone carried away. This man loves this person and suffers. Some love can be true, yet sinful.

The fourth arch presents the black horse rider of Revelation 6 with a pair of scale, but the scales are long gone, and only the stick holding them remains.

In the fifth arch, Lust is a woman with large breasts sitting legs apart on a monk, with hybrid features in her lion feet clawing into the shoulders of a bishop crushing a king. A chain strangling her at the neck further deforms her ape-like face, making her shut her eyes and stick out her tongue. It is noticeable that many of the damned are kings, queens and bishops, reminding us “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,” (Matthew 19:24). In this case, the king at the bottom is being sodomized, giving a sense of the sexual perversion he may have inflicted unpunished due to his high status and power.

In the very last scene, the amalgam of bodies is such that it is nearly impossible to make out what is monster and what is not. Monsters and damned souls are fused together in what may be the last stage of Hell when no mercy or escape is possible, when one’s identity is dissolved into the chaotic mass of a deformation akin to leprosy, with bugs crawling and feasting on the rotten soft meat.

The scenes from hell present a horrible and confusing mess, while those of heaven to the left are straightforward: the four scenes with three people looking from a tower are the same, and all twelve people look alike with their curly hair, crown and smiley faces. The lesson taught is not that Heaven is that much fun (it's for sheep after all), but rather that while Hell is a terrible place to avoid at all cost, it is much more fascinating—for the artists who doubtlessly took pleasure in creating such scenes, and for those who look at them. Saint-Bernard has a point when saying art is dangerous.<sup>25</sup>

**When and how are men called to judgment (fig. 2.23)? Who is called to judgment? Why are they no babies?**

The tympanum gives a dramatic account of the last judgment. It starts in the lower lintel, depicting the passage in Matthew 24:31, “he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call,” and indeed two angels can be seen blowing their long trumpets (called *olifants* in French). This trumpet call causes the dead people to emerge from their tomb, as described in John 5:28–29, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemn.” The deads lift the top of their casket, coming back at the age and with the costume of their death, and looking dazzled like someone waking up from a long sleep. The medieval society is represented in its entirety: children, adolescents, knight, African, nobles, king, queen, clergy: all are to be judged, even a pope. Only babies are missing—it must be that sinless they go straight to Heaven with no need to check in with Saint Michel, and join the multitude of cherubs in the first two archivolts, in the best spot close by Jesus, surrounding him with their joyful, pure souls.

**The trial (fig. 2.22): identify and describe Saint Michel weighing souls. What makes the demon to the right of the scale a monster? What about the two small people being judged? Does the trial seem fair? How are the ten elected people acting? What about the ten chained-up damned souls?**

In the lintel above, Saint Michel weighs souls, standing tall above all others and facing us beholders, impassible (figs. 2.22 and 2.24). Clothed in a smooth pleated robe that emphasizes his height, his deployed wings and large halo further make him stand out as the commanding figure of the lintel, and indeed he is the one to hold the scale. A demon stands to the right of the scale symmetrically to Saint Michel. His torso and arms are human, and he has the legs, small horns and shaggy hair of a goat, like the goats Jesus separates from the

sheep in Matthew 25:31.<sup>26</sup> He further has the long tail of a horse and claws of a prey bird.

The demon is a monster in that he belongs to many species: human, horse, birds, and goat. This implies a satanic intermix of species, with humans sinfully coupling with animals.<sup>27</sup> The demon also has a second head at his belly, and although multiplication of features happens in nature (some families having many of its members born with six fingers for instance), it is another sign of monstrosity. Even then, and although stocky, the demon could look handsome (his torso is rather virile!), but his face is deformed and frozen in a roguery grimace.

And indeed, the scene deploys a horrible drama: two small people just emerged from the dead are being weighed and judged. The small person on Saint Michel's side is praying and focusing on repentance, and her side of the scale appears to be winning. On the right side, a little soul holding tight to the scale chain fights for dear life—but he is a goner: the big demon looks at him with a knowing smile full of canines, pushing the scale down with his claws (and cheating), while a small demon at his feet pulls down on his leg so much that it seems about to break. The demons know he stands no chance and will join the group of damned to the right, but they make the most of the moment, enjoying and prolonging the torment—which according to Revelation 20:10 will last “day and night for ever and ever.” Unlike them, Saint Michel does not attempt to win over the damned, or even pays close attention to the cheating taking place. It is not his job: Jesus above him is there to give the last verdict. Rather, he looks at us, warning us of what to expect after we die.

On the left of Saint Michel, ten people wear crowns of life (Revelation 2:10, “I will give you the crown of life”), showing they passed the test of the balance and can go to Heaven. Six of them have their gaze fixed on Jesus, thanking him for his grace. The four others to their left focus on what happens next, as an angel points their way toward Heaven. Two of the elected people, number 4 and 5 starting from the left, hold hands. Those must be spouses or lovers that were separated by death and have just met again. What a sweet and comforting image.

On the right of the tall demon, ten damned souls are chained up and pulled toward hell. Unlike the elected people who all wear the same crown of life, those include a knight, a monk, a bishop, a king and a noble woman, still holding on to their earthly status and unwilling to transform into pure souls. They look down in a great state of anxiety, and we wish for them to lift their eyes and look up to Jesus for salvation. We know they could still repent and have grace bestowed upon them. But they look the wrong way and are on their way to Hell.

**Finally, the viewer is given a message of hope. Examine the sitting Jesus in the apex (fig. 2.21): clothes, hair, expression, hands and halo. What is his role in the last judgment?**

Another Christ sits in the Apex of the tympanum, with two angels at his sides carrying the instruments of the Passion—square nails, spear and cross. His mother Mary and John also flank him, both human beings that Jesus loves of an earthly love. While the teaching Jesus below has the stern look a university professor, the seated Jesus smiles. His naked torso indicates vulnerability (with flat muscles unlike the demon's), reinforced by his more feminine flowing hair and curlier beard. Finally, Jesus holds his hands up (missing his left thumb), showing the holes from the nails. This is a more emotional and approachable Jesus, the incarnated one with a “real” body that can feel pain and die just like ours.

It is also a Christ in his glory, whose wounds prove he has triumphed over death. The halo behind his head is now a distinctive feature, much larger in size and crowning him like a king. Rays of light radiate from him, indicating his glorious transformation into light. This is the Christ who tells us, “I am the light,” and belongs to the divine.

Our human condition is exceptional in the universe: while in Eden, we ate the fruit of knowledge, but then wasted time sewing fig leaves and did not get to eat from the tree of life (Genesis 3:22). As a result, we do not live forever, and because we ate from the tree of knowledge, we are aware of it. This is what makes our predicament so unique: animals die but do not have knowledge of their death, and God has the knowledge but is eternal and cannot understand our anxiety toward death. This is where Jesus comes in.

Unlike plants, animals and God, Jesus knows in his flesh what suffering means. When holding out his pierced hands, he communicates with us through his wounds, just like he did with Thomas telling him to touch his wounds when doubting. Even in his resurrected body, the wounds are still present, showing he can still hurt along with us. The Christ, both human and divine, is our tie to God who is only divine, and the tie is love. This is true for us too, because love is all-powerful. I knew I loved my Stuart before he died, I just did not know the power of love. For even for us during our short earthly life, love is of an eternal and infinite nature, and our indestructible tie with each other, here and beyond.

Interaction: The Notre-Dame Woman

**Describe her body, hair, face and expression. How can you tell it is a woman? What does she do?**

The Notre-Dame Woman is about four times smaller than Saint Michel or any other person of the lintel. Of course, she had to fit in the balance tray like the

damned soul in the other tray. Yet, it seems appropriate she would have shrunk in a desperate move to make herself as humble and unthreatening as possible at the moment of her trial.

The Notre-Dame Woman is naked. It may be the clothing weight would impede a truthful reading of the balance, and that one has to be naked in order to be reborn in the kingdom of heaven. Her nudity also makes her unique in the portal: all other people are dressed in head-to-toe draping, and while monsters may unashamedly display their nudity, most of them are partially covered with fur. The Notre-Dame Woman has no bodily hair, but she manages to hide her sexual organs, usually associated with sin, as if eager to efface that part of her being.

Unlike the Vitruvian Man drawing (chapter 3), the level of detailing is minimal and her smooth body shows no asperity aside a navel. Her facial features are expressionless, reflecting those of Saint Michel with no joy nor scorn. The eyes are closed in a prayer. Her hair is pulled back and parted in the middle. No curly hair like Saint Michel or flowing hair like Jesus, and also no beard. At this point, it is hard to assign a gender to that person—could this person be genderless? No: although we do not see much of her naked body, the tummy and hips are clearly rounded. In fact, the hips are wider than the shoulders, and this is indicative of a feminine gender: the little person is a woman, and she hides her breasts behind her arms.

Like the men in *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons*, the Notre-Dame Woman kneels in an intercessory prayer. When Abélard writes, “We have indeed many examples as evidence of the high position in the eyes of God and his saints which has been won by the prayers of the faithful, especially those of the women on behalf of their dear ones and of wives for their husbands” (see text below in 2.3), he indicates women are especially worthy mediators between earthly sins and perfected divine, and this may explain why the little person at the center of the central portal is a woman rather than a man. In the case of the Notre-Dame Woman, her prayer is offered to God through Christ as the ultimate intercessor that closes the gap between us and God, and present in the apex of the portal right above her.

**Look at the geometrical composition of the balance and Notre-Dame Woman. How many triangles and circle can you find? Why would the top part of her body be emphasized?**

The balance is composed of two simple geometrical shapes: the bowl in a semicircular shape and the chains forming an upward isosceles triangle. The Notre-Dame Woman fits in those two shapes, with her hidden lower body and legs scrunched up in the bottom half-circle, her wide hips forming the base of the triangle, and her upper body and head snugly fitted within the triangle. Her shoulders form the

base of a second smaller triangle in the top part of the bigger triangle. Her arms form a third triangle, although not as pointed and closer to equilateral in shape, with her hands at the top joined and pointing upward in perfect symmetry. This triangle is mirrored in the lines between her tummy and hips, forming together a diamond that would have her navel at its center.

Her bottom part, associated with genitals and sins, are hidden from view, but even then it is doubtless her legs would fit in that small bowl. On the other hand, the top part of her body is fully displayed, emphasizing her mental over her physical abilities, and her ability to exercise free will and choose Virtues over Vices.

### **Examine how the Notre-Dame Woman may embody a Gothic esthetic of vertical thrust.**

The top part of the Notre-Dame Woman fits into the steep upward triangle formed by the balance chains, favoring the vertical esthetic of Gothic architecture. The horizontal of the semi-circle brings a horizontal and “balances” the vertical of the composition like we saw in the composition of the west facade of Notre-Dame—and indeed, the composition literally depicts a balance. The rounded shape is also an upside-down Romanesque semi-circle little used by the Gothic esthetic, except for rose windows. Likewise, the Notre-Dame Woman favors the vertical esthetic: the square at her tummy is oriented vertically in a pointy and more dynamic diamond shape, her arms form a perfectly symmetrical arch, and her hands point upward in a Gothic vertical thrust. Although praying, she holds herself straight: unlike the Romanesque church that is a place of inner withdrawal and meditation, she incarnates the Gothic cathedral standing erect toward heaven.

Finally, the Notre-Dame Woman occupies the most tenuous position possible, as she waits naked in the balance for her judgment. Unlike any other creature on earth, she has the knowledge of good and evil and that she may well end up head first in a cauldron. But however precarious this position may be, she also occupies the exact centerline of the portal composition, with no one else but the Teaching Jesus below and the sitting Christ above. It will not be long before that little person becomes empowered into the Renaissance Vitruvian Man (chapter 3), standing alone at the center of the world.

## **2.2.4 Rose Windows at Notre-Dame**

Warm-up Exercise: Visual or Factual Memory?

Ask students to look at the BD (bande dessinée or comic strip) of *The Golden Moments of Notre-Dame de Paris* for a few minutes, then close their book and see

how they read it. Make a two-entry chart on the board, with “picture” and “text” at the top, and number one to five on the left for each panel. Ask students to help you fill in the chart, in whichever order they like.

Number the order of those they remember first to see what and how they read—image v/s text. After you fill in some information, give them more and more clues (“there were two people in the second picture, who were they? What did they set the glass in?”). Discuss the results together to evaluate their visual and conceptual memory. Consider also which of the text or image carries the most valuable information.

### Interaction: Thomas Aquinas and the South Rose Window

**In the first panel**, the caption explains, “Thomas Aquinas visits the workshop where they’re making the great south rose window ...” presenting at once Thomas Aquinas and the south rose window, and bringing together two separate disciplines, history of ideas and architecture.

Thomas Aquinas is an Italian Dominican priest and influential professor of philosophy and theology at the University of Paris who considerably impacts the development of modern philosophy.<sup>28</sup> We do not learn about his ideas in the BD, although we do about his personality. First of all, he does not say a word. This is consistent with his temperament, as he was supposed to be so quiet that some of his fellow students called him dumb, moving his teacher Albertus Magnus to exclaim, “You call him the dumb ox, but in his teaching he will one day produce such a bellowing that it will be heard throughout the world.” He does not talk, but in panel 2 and 4 his eyes are focused on the information given by the master, showing what a good listener he is. In panel 3, he bends down to check over the worker’s shoulder, showing his curiosity for all aspects of life, including its most minute material details. This brings to expect his ideas in *Summa Theologica* to be likewise based on knowledge and thoughtful reflection.<sup>29</sup>

In the word balloon of panel 1, the master explains steps in glass making, starting with the fact that elements are “blown-glass.” While the text does not explain how glass-blowing works, it is shown in the drawing. On the left side of the workshop, a glassworker wearing gloves attends a furnace. He has gathered molten glass on the end of a blowpipe and will soon use the glass viscosity to inflate it. As it loses heat, the glass gradually hardens, and the glassworker will then quickly work the blob into a desired shape. The master also explains how “each blown-glass element corresponds with a number on the model.” On the picture, he points to a man setting colored pieces of glass into pigeon-holes, used to organize elements corresponding to a number for each part of the rose. The

master finally says, “It is painted and left in the oven for four or five hours.” The oven, a *lehr* or annealer, slowly cools the glass to keep it from cracking, and in this case, the text gives information not shown in the picture.

On the other hand, the picture presents information not given in the text, such as a section template of a quarter of the rose attached to the wall, and a “glory hole” holding a small fire used to reheat a piece of glass or lead in between steps of working with it. A younger man to the right leaning over a bench sets pieces together into a pattern, and the older man in blue in the middle sitting on another bench sets the pieces into lead.

**Panel 2 and 3** explain the work of the older man in blue in detail, making an unusual use of word balloons. Word balloons are emblematic of comic books, and each one is connected to one person as if the words were coming from their mouth. In the case of panel 2, the balloon comes from the master in panel 3. This deviation from the norm helps to emphasize non-talking Thomas Aquinas by showing him four times, while the master appears only three times even though he speaks in four-word balloons. In panel 3, we are given a close-up view of the man in blue. He has moved little from panel 1, while the master now points to him while looking at Thomas Aquinas, who in turns looks with interest to what the craftsman does. The information in panel 2, 3 and 4 is rather technical and likely skimmed over on a first time reading. The fact the drawing does not show the man in blue doing another task (for instance putting glue on the lead to make the windows air-tight), indicates cartoonist Claude Lacroix may himself have skimmed the information given by the author, Serge St Michel. The explanation in panel 4 about the metal reinforcement could also have used an image—or then not be given at all.

**Panel 5** has the most exquisite and useful drawing—and why I have chosen to include this BD in the first place. It shows how truly big rose windows are by giving it a scale with people working on it. This is something not visible in reality, and much more effective than giving numbers—which is done in the text as “six and a half units,” and even the note telling it is thirteen meters and a little over fourteen yards, does not make it real like the image does.

Panel 5 also gives a sense of the intricacy involved in planning, building and assembling a rose, and how Gothic architecture requires skills of architects that could conceive its every part on paper. We clearly see the modular pieces, for instance, the colonnettes that are made on the same module, all forty-eight of them. We also see how the components are laid out, before being fitted in the circle masonry, from bottom to top (which is shown for the north rose on the previous page of the BD).

The drawing shows beautifully how thrilling it must have been to see the pieces put in place one at a time above the transept door, and how it must have been a cause for great celebration. The caption tells it is the year 1270, and the first-word balloon explains how “Good King Louis” wants to be part of putting up the window before leaving on a crusade. This is Louis IX, better known since as Saint Louis, the only canonized king of France. He did wait for the rose window to be up to leave on his second crusade, during which he dies in Tunis of dysentery. He also builds the Sainte-Chapelle (see later in this chapter). Finally, the word balloon to the right compares Gothic rose windows to bull’s-eye windows in “previous” churches, which are the Romanesque churches.

**Which specific values might BDs (*bandes dessinées*) have over another form of art? Does it deserve the appellation of “ninth art”?**

When studying this BD, we see how pictorial and textual information weave into each other. Some panels focus on the image, like panel 1 and panel 5, in which case the text is fairly short. Other panels focus on the text, as is the case of panels 2, 3 and 4, which do not give much new pictorial information. But this last aspect is due to the fact that this is an informative BD focused on Notre-Dame, and more packed with information than action. It is doubtful many people will read the text bubbles in panels 2–3–4 the first time around, but it could happen in a later reading.

The different depth of reading is particular of BDs. The reader can choose his speed and style of reading: some parts can be read in great details, and others be skimmed over just to get the basic plot going. This also means they can be read over and over again, usually including more and more details which make it always new in some ways. It also means BDs can help those processing images better than text, as is the case with small children, dyslexics, but also foreigners who may find the picture support helpful (make sure to visit the BD section at La Fnac when visiting Paris). In this sense, BDs bring words and images together in a way unavailable in other medias, similar to allegories with text surrounding them, like is the case for instance of Suger’s stained-glass windows, each panel saying part of the story. As a new form of allegories, with their side-to-side panels and text built into them, BDs may indeed be considered a ninth art. Finally, by combining text and pictures, BDs achieve the interdisciplinary goal of bringing together fields that are usually disconnected, in this case architecture and history of ideas within a specific time period—much like this book attempts to do.

## Project: Inside and Outside the West Rose

Aside from the *Romance of the Rose*, see the 1259 *Gulistan* (“The Rose Garden”) by Persian Poet Saadi, a collection of poems and stories of worldwide influence, and often quoted as a source of wisdom (one verse is displayed in the entrance of the United Nations Hall of Nations).<sup>30</sup>

**Describe the outside view of the west rose window (fig. 2.26): the combination of a circle and a square in its composition, the stone tracery with the least possible amount of stone, its division in twelve petals for twelve months, and the way it radiates like the spokes of a wheel. Which feature of the west rose window is the most striking from outside? What message does it convey?**

The outside view of the west rose window displays the stone tracery, standing out on the black background formed by the stained glass: no colors here in modern times (which was not the case originally—see the inside of the Sainte-Chapelle to have an idea of the colors they used). In Notre-Dame, the challenge of using the least possible amount of stone to support the largest possible area of glass reaches such a level of perfection that the west window becomes the archetype of rose windows from then on.<sup>31</sup>

The stone tracery also radiates continuously from a central oculus toward the periphery, like the spokes of a wheel. In the west rose, the radiating spokes form twelve petals, each one further divided in two on the outer circle, forming twenty-four petals. In the north and south roses, built later on the same model, the spokes form sixteen petals further divided into thirty-two petals. Also, as beautifully shown in *The Golden Moments*’ panel 5, the stone units are modular, each spoke treated as a colonnette with its own miniature Corinthian capital and supporting tri-lobed clover arcades. Those colonnettes, capitals and clover arcades are similar to those of the King’s Gallery below and the Grande Gallery above, tying the design of the facade at this level as well. Finally, the colonnettes form a centrifugal pattern with their plinths at the center and capitals on the perimeter.

The west rose window combines a circle (symbol of God’s infinite, eternal and perfect nature), inscribed in a square (symbol of the created, material world). By inscribing a circle into a square, God enters its creation, which is the process of incarnation.<sup>32</sup> The division of the rose into twelve petals for the twelve months reflects its cyclic time, and its location at the west where the sun sets emphasizes its daily course. As mortal beings, we participate in the repetitive time of days and seasons through our labor (allegorized in the stained glass as we will see below), and while the circle may be infinite, like the dreamer of the *Romance of the Rose* we humans only take part of the dance for a few rounds.

The intricacy and fragility of the stone tracery bring a sense of awe that is human in nature: we marvel at how Gothic men could build such a perfectly beautiful piece of architecture. Likewise, the statue of crowned Mary holding Jesus in the foreground presents the Christ as a vulnerable baby, emphasizing his human nature and as part of the Trinity making God's presence manifest on earth. On the other hand, the inside view brings an awe of quite a different nature.

**Describe the inside view of the west rose window (fig. 2.27): what happened to the stone tracery and colonnettes? How about the petals: how many, and what may each now represent? Which feature of the west rose window is the most striking from inside?**

From inside, stone tracery and stained glass exchange role: It is now the stained glass that becomes visible while the stone tracery turns into a black background. This permutation brings other inversions. The colonnettes that supported clover arches on the outside now look like abstract black lines continuously radiating from the center; and the clover arcades circling the middle seem inverted from concave to convex shapes, forming the design of a spider-web. It may be the same window, but what was on the outside a man-made rose of stone has transformed inside into a shining flower of light.

The petals of the rose are filled with portraits and allegories. A mother and child take up the center of the oculus, mirroring the sculpture on the outside. The inner circle of twelve petals portrays the twelve prophets of the Old Testament, as our interpreters of the scripture. The outer circle of twenty-four petals is divided into two zones: in the upper half, the middle circle contains vices and the outer circle corresponding virtues; in the lower half, the middle circle depicts zodiac signs and the outer circle labors or activities associated with a month. The petals located at the horizontal present a combination of the four, as is the case of the month of December.

**In the inner quatrefoil of the December month (look it up at “west rose segment BAR800” or [Paradoxplace.com](http://Paradoxplace.com)), identify a prophet, the vice of Cowardice, the zodiac sign of the Capricorn, the virtue of Fortitude and a footsie game. What is the role of humor in it?**

In the December section (the horizontal segment to the right side), the inner quatrefoil presents a prophet holding a scroll. The middle two circles present the vice of Cowardice (a man scared by a rabbit who runs away leaving his sword behind) and the zodiac sign of the Capricorn as a sea goat (a mythical creature that is a goat half covered in scales). The outer two quatrefoils present the virtue

of Fortitude (a courageous woman calmly sitting down with a spear and shield, ready for combat), and a footsie at a December dinner for two. Note the touches of humor: you have to be quite a coward to run away from a rabbit, and while rural labor is mostly a hardship, in the case of December it is a flirting game. The humor must have brought adults and children alike into studying with delight the stained glass allegories, much like BD panels today (and some have text included as well). All together they form a stained glass calendar, with the outer circle of twenty-four petals portraying our human story in a moral lesson of vices and virtues, in relation to the cosmic order of months, seasons and zodiac.

**Report to the class and discuss the following: How inside and outside views offer radically different experiences, one of the material world, the other of the immaterial world.**

There are two levels of reading of the stained-glass window from inside. From close up, the small allegories enclosed in quatrefoils and circles tell our human story. From far away, its round shape evokes the universe and its infinite nature, while its precise geometrical division portrays a perfected divine order.<sup>33</sup> Together, they bring in harmony the microcosm of human life with the macrocosm of the universe.

Furthermore, the rose window offers a dialogue between material and immaterial in its inside and outside views. On the outside, the stone tracery with colonnettes and capitals emanates from a human design, and as such brings a sense of awe at how Gothic men could conceive and build such an exquisitely fragile piece of architecture. This experience is of an esthetic nature. From the inside, the stone tracery inverts into an abstract black pattern governed by precise geometric rules, much like a spider spinning her web following an invisible God-given blueprint. The inversion is from a human design on the outside to a God-given design on the inside, from a material below to an immaterial above.

**When a small child, Viollet-le-Duc looking at the rose window of Notre-Dame would see it turn—which scared him. How could this happen, and what kind of spiritual experience would it provide?**

But even then, something more happens in the rose window of Notre-Dame. We saw how the stone tracery radiates like the spokes of a wheel, and this may be its most important feature yet. For on a cloudy day, when the sun comes out and starts playing in and out of clouds, it illuminates different portions of the wheel with iridescent ripples. The clouds as they move make the wind visible, and the breath of life of the Holy Spirit brings the rose to life. The rose palpitates, and, yes, the wheel starts turning.<sup>34</sup>

What a vertiginous moment, when the wheel of color turns and grabs you along into the cosmic movement of the universe. Stepping out of your tiny visible portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, you move on from micro to macro, where material absence becomes immaterial presence. It is God's presence you are now to encounter. And this, my friend, is a spiritual experience.

Observation: "God Help the Outcast," in Walt Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, 1996

**Esmeralda starts her journey at the 14C statue of the Virgin and child: how are Mary and Jesus depicted? Which aspect of the Christ does she relate to?**

The 14C statue is one of the first naturalistic depictions of the mother and child, and although featured as a miniature adult, Jesus acts like a baby when playing with Mary's veil. In the Disney version of the statue, Mary has the same stern look, but Jesus has longer, curlier hair and does not hold a ball as it does in the original.

Esmeralda looks at the statue and is impressed by Mary depicted as a queen, wondering if as a gypsy and outcast she has the right to address a queen. But then she says, "Still I see Your face and wonder . . . Were You once an outcast too?" as she suddenly relates to the Christ's humanity, how he was born in a stable from an unwed mother, and died the death of an outcast, crucified by his own people, abandoned by all (well, except his mom and John, but moms are a category apart—which leaves a question mark as to John and Jesus' relationship). When Jesus says on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34), it shows how deserted he feels. On the other hand, it is also the greatest gift: God's love is so strong that he gives freedom to his son to live his destiny as he chooses, even if it means dying. Esmeralda connects with this aspect of the Christ. She chooses to be free even if it means to be an outcast and to stand up for her beliefs as she did when coming to Quasimodo's rescue against a mob of people.

**When Esmeralda walks in the side-aisle, whom does she pray for? Compare the parishioners' prayer with her intercessory prayer.**

In the second paragraph, Esmeralda prays for her people the gypsies, but as Quasimodo makes his way from the bell tower to the tribune, the term of gypsy now designates outcasts in general, including Quasimodo for his physical difference. This is an intercessory prayer: Esmeralda prays on behalf of others and acts as a mediator.

The value of her prayer is emphasized as parishioners move up the nave opposite Esmeralda in the side-aisle, and address their own prayers. They ask

for wealth, fame, glory, and when asking for love, it is one they can “possess” and opposite from the love that frees, like God’s love for his son on the cross. As they arrive in the chancel they finally ask for blessing, but those are directed to themselves. They lift up their hands where the Christ takes the whole central bay of the stained-glass window (which is not the case in Notre-Dame), indicating how they put Jesus to work for them. Their love for the Christ is one they can “possess” as well.

In contrast with the parishioners, Esmeralda asks nothing for herself, showing the unselfishness of a mediator. She approaches the great south rose window and claims, “God help the outcasts/Children of God,” in a chiasm where God is the constant, and the “outcasts” in the first half become his “children” in the second half. This is beautiful in words and in picture as well, as she walks into the light of the south rose window.

**She finally gets to the great south rose window in the transept. What is the action of light on her? Compare with Abbot Suger’s “anagogical” transport.**

As she walks toward the south rose window, the colored light infuses the transept and shimmers as if pulsating with a life force. Rather than lifting her prayer to an image of Christ like the parishioners did, it is the light of God that comes to her. Then, all of a sudden, the perspective pulls back toward the window in the great vertical height of the cathedral, as if Esmeralda herself was taken by the light and moving back toward its source—God. This is similar to Suger anagogical transport, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter when he writes, “I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.” Esmeralda however quickly comes back to earth, as her goat claims her share of love.

Esmeralda’s journey is one we can all take in Notre-Dame and all Gothic churches, from a material, embodied Jesus we can relate to as is the case of the statue of the mother and child, to an immaterial God visible only in the light that emanates from him. As the film shows beautifully, it is in the abstract, shimmering light of a rose window that the spiritual experience can best take place.

## 2.3 Abélard and Héloïse: To Teach and Punish

Observation: Abélard, *Historia Calamitatum*, 1132

Note that Abbot Suger is contemporary to Abélard and Héloïse and plays a decisive role in their life, when Abélard joins Suger’s Saint-Denis Abbey after his castration in 1118 and when Suger gets Héloïse expelled from Argenteuil.<sup>35</sup>

**[1] How does Abélard describe Héloïse? How about himself? What does the last sentence of the first paragraph might foresee?**

When Abélard writes in *Historia Calamitatum*, “There was in Paris at the time a young girl named Héloïse, the niece of Fulbert, one of the canons, and so much loved by him that he had done everything in his power to advance her education in letters,” he creates an analogical field between love and letters. The love of Fulbert for his niece is equated with the advancement of her “education in letters.” Merriam-Webster defines “letter” as (1) a symbol usually written or printed representing a speech sound and constituting a unit of an alphabet; (2) a direct or personal written or printed message addressed to a person or organization (3) *plural but sing or plural in constr*: literature, belles lettres; (4) the strict or outward sense or significance “the letter of the law.” As we will see, Abélard uses those four meanings of “letters” in his analogy, starting here with letters as a field of knowledge, which he emphasizes rather than grammar and rhetoric she also studies. This first sentence describes the love between Fulbert and Héloïse: Héloïse is “so much loved by him” tells how Fulbert loves Héloïse but does not tell how she feels toward him as if it did not matter for the plot. When Abélard further writes, “he had done everything in his power,” he indicates how unusual Fulbert’s love is and gives a premonition on how he will do “everything” as well to keep Héloïse for himself, even castrate Abélard.

Abélard describes Héloïse, “In looks she did not rank lowest, while in the extent of her learning she stood supreme.” With her “looks” and her “learning” side by side, he presents two aspects of her personality in a *Sic and Non* dialectic fashion with no real conclusion. This is a delightful example of a disputation set-up, where Héloïse when reading, “in looks she did not rank lowest,” would have jumped in a verbal battle. I can see her in her house on the Île de la Cité, standing by the little window looking at the Seine and the Port de Grève beyond, too incensed to sit and protesting, “What do you mean, Abélard, about my looks ‘not ranking lowest?’” “What is your problem, Héloïse? I was only trying to show how supreme your intelligence is. Don’t you like it?” “Yes, but it did not have to be to the detriment of my looks. Nothing kept you from saying how attractive I was to you, both physically and mentally.” “You are right, Héloïse, I could have.” “Yes, but you did not.” Abélard would smile, “But why would I have? It is so much more fun to argue with you.” “You are such an arrogant bastard.” “I know.” And she would smile too.

When Abélard says that her “gift for letters [...] added greatly to her charm,” he defines once more Héloïse in terms of “letters,” and how letters can actually be substituted to physical charm, making it sound like her looks are indeed rather

average, and that she could use some help with it. Abélard then explains, “I considered all the usual attractions for a lover and decided she was the one to bring to my bed, confident that I should have an easy success.” This sentence strikes me as funny when compared with the courtly tradition of love in the *Romance of the Rose*. Abélard “consider[s] all the usual attractions for a lover” in a totally unromantic way, considering love as he would any other philosophical questions, and applying the same rational approach and logic. “I decided she was the one to bring to my bed” makes his desire seem straightforward: he wants to bed her and that’s it. Although when he writes, “I decided she was the one,” “the one” brings an important nuance: taking a woman to one’s bed can seem as no commitment, but if that woman is “the one” then it might imply that he has not brought any other woman to his bed before, and that his feelings for Héloïse are unique. Abélard, although 38, was likely a virgin, as he mentions himself further on (see below) and as is generally agreed on. So, Héloïse may be “the one,” like the rose of the dreamer was unique among all roses, even though Abélard does not speak of love.

In contrast to his description of Héloïse as “not rank[ing] lowest” in looks, Abélard describes himself as having “youth and exceptional good looks.” He presents his physical appearance as his best feature, and his reputation second as if it did not matter as much, except that any woman could only see it as an honor to be loved by him. He makes it sound like he does Héloïse a favor to choose her as his lover, which is extremely arrogant. It is also disputative, as he presents both of them unfairly. He is not the one having “youth” to start with, since he is 38 and she is 16. Also, his looks cannot be as “exceptional” as his reputation of a master of the Cloister School of Paris, which was such that it attracted students from all over Europe. But after reading this first paragraph, one is left with the impression that Héloïse is “supreme” as a scholar and not that good looking, while Abélard’s attraction consists of his good looks over his reputation.

This is odd. Why does Abélard speak of beauty in the first place, if Héloïse is not that good looking? Why is it an important criterion to mention, more than their lineage for instance (the only one mentioned being her uncle)? In modern times, we could think he is trying to minimize their twenty-two years difference in age. She is a minor, and at thirty-eight, he could pass for a prying old man using his reputation to take advantage of a young girl. But this would likely be an anachronism.

In the last sentence, Abélard mentions letters again, but this time in its second sense of “written messages” as he specifies, “even when separated we could enjoy each other’s presence by exchange of written messages.” Even before recounting

how he will seduce Héloïse, Abélard already explains how in a material absence of each other, they can use letters as a substitute for their presence. When adding, “in which we could speak more openly than in person,” he indicates that conversing in letters could be better than in person, and when concluding, “and so need never lack the pleasures of conversation,” he substitutes the “pleasures of conversation” by letters to the physical pleasures of presence (and lovemaking). We start suspecting that Abélard’s ultimate goal might be to engage twenty-nine years old Abbess Héloïse into a correspondence.

**[2] How does Abélard manipulate Héloïse’s uncle? Is it very astute of him when you know her uncle will eventually castrate him?**

“All on fire with desire for this girl”: once again, Abélard does not describe his relationship with Héloïse in term of love but desire. He also refers to her as “this girl,” disregarding Héloïse as a person and reducing her to a non-entity, much like President Clinton saying, “I did not have sexual relations with ‘that’ woman.” It is as if it did not matter which girl it was as much as the fact he is in fire with desire. To win over Héloïse is not an issue either, and instead, Abélard focuses on how he tricked her uncle.

Abélard explains how he got to live in Fulbert’s house, because of Fulbert’s love for money, and his desire to better his niece’s education. This makes sense until Abélard points out, “he gave me complete charge over the girl, so that I could devote all the leisure time left me by my school to teaching her by day and night, and if I found her idle I was to punish her severely.” The “all the leisure time” appears excessive with its quantitative “all” for the little time he would normally have had to tutor Héloïse, and speaking of “leisure” presents the tutoring like not a serious activity. “By day and night” further indicates with “night” a shadier activity than would be expected from tutoring. Finally, there is the suspicious, “if I found her idle I was to punish her severely.” Not only Fulbert gives Abélard the power to punish his beloved niece, but he is to do it “severely.” This brings questions about Fulbert’s own relationship with Héloïse. We now know that not only Héloïse is “so much loved by him,” but that “severe” corporal punishment may have been a practice of his own to bend her down to his will.<sup>36</sup> Or at least, “severe” corporal punishment is in his moral boundaries, and will eventually include “severing” Abélard’s private parts.

When Abélard writes, “I was amazed by his simplicity—if he had entrusted a tender lamb to a ravening wolf it would not have surprised me more,” he indicates he could not believe how gullible Fulbert is, in giving him the power to take Héloïse by force if she had resisted him. Meanwhile, as readers who know the

ending of the story, we are ourselves “amazed by [Abélard’s] simplicity,” and that he did not perceive Fulbert’s oddity rather than his “simplicity.” When he adds, “if he had entrusted a tender lamb to a ravening wolf it would not have surprised me more,” Abélard portrays in this metaphor Héloïse as a “tender lamb” and himself as a “ravening wolf,” insisting on Héloïse’s innocence and his own culpability in their love story. However, the ravening wolf may well be Fulbert.

Abélard then comments, “In handing her over to me to punish as well as to teach, what else was he doing but giving me complete freedom to realize my desires, and providing an opportunity, even if I did not make use of it, for me to bend her to my will by threats and blows if persuasion failed?” Once again, with “to punish as well as to teach” he puts in parallel physical and intellectual activities, presenting the teacher-student relationship in terms of power (and alas still not always excluded in 21C universities), with the professor enjoying his/her control over students. Abélard also explains he “did not make use of it,” meaning that Héloïse accepted and he did not have to rape her. But he presents it as if he could have, ignoring Héloïse’s role in their story, and insisting on what a bad, big wolf he was—even though he did not use violence. More on this below.

**[3] Examine how studying and lovemaking are intertwined, and how Abélard and Héloïse put the same curiosity in love as they would in any intellectual subject.**

“Need I say more?” is funny because Abélard does not linger in what usually constitutes the largest part of a story like the *Romance of the Rose* dragging on and on at this point with the suspenseful suspension of a desire to be accomplished—“will they or won’t they do it?” No such question for Abélard who tears away the in-between figural space of an immaterial ideal love that can only be seen through circumvallating allegories. On the other hand, Abélard presents their early courtship in a metaphoric field intertwining love and studies, as he writes: (1) “and so with our lessons as a pretext we abandoned ourselves entirely to love.” Studies are what give them a pretext for love. Love needs a pre-text, a script to follow, and for scholarly Abélard cannot be conceived outside a text. (2) “Her studies allowed us to withdraw in private, as love desired,” Abélard clearly draws the parallel with the comparative word “as.” To study and to love are similar in that you need privacy for both. (3) “And then with our books open before us, more words of love than of our reading passed between us”: the medium of love and books are both words. Words are also what “passed between us,” and what joins them—even when physically present to each other. (4) “And more kissing than teaching” underlines the erotic aspect of teaching. There may be more kissing, but

they go along with each other. (5) “My hands strayed oftener to her bosom than to the pages,” indicates that for Abélard a hand to the breast is comparable to a hand to a page. He “writes” Héloïse’s breast as he would write on a page. Breast is *sinus* in Latin, sign. This is the first meaning of “letter,” and Héloïse here is reduced to a letter “S.” (6) “Love drew our eyes to look on each other more than reading kept them on our texts.” Here again, even if there is more looking on each other than books, books are still the norm that defines love. There is a lot of love going on because there is more time spent on it than on studying. Abélard’s measuring stick is the written words. By drawing such a close analogy between love and words, Abélard is preparing the replacement of one by the other, where the absence of the body in lovemaking can be replaced in absence by the exchange of letters. Lessons as a “pretext” for love can be replaced by another pretext in the form of a correspondence.

Abélard then comments, “To avert suspicion I sometimes struck her, but these blows were prompted by love and tender feeling rather than anger and irritation, and were sweeter than any balm could be.” This is another puzzling piece of information. Abélard said earlier that Fulbert was not suspicious: “But there were two special reasons for his freedom from base suspicion: his love for his niece and my previous reputation for continence.” So, why did he need to “avert suspicion” by striking Héloïse, if Fulbert is not suspicious? The blows that earlier were conceived as a mean to seduce Héloïse (or rape her, really, if she refused him), are now part of their lovemaking. The blows are not there to divert the suspicion of Fulbert, but the suspicion of Fulbert is there to divert the erotic function of blows. It adds an erotic dimension with the phantasm of mastering the other in a sadomasochistic relationship since there is no rape. It is a game they play and enjoy together, a new form of “disputation” where the verbal battle includes physical blows and would be addressed to a fake audience in the person of uncle Fulbert rather than fellow scholars and students. I can hear Abélard and Héloïse battling behind doors and pretending they perform for Fulbert, outwitting each other in a double entente game between studies and lovemaking. It must have been quite a sight. We now understand why it was so important for Héloïse to be “supreme” in letters, as letters allow to pervert love, to cover it with an intellectual layer they could manipulate with infinite possibilities, multiplying forms of pleasure all the while.

When Abélard adds, “In short, our desires left no stage of love-making untried, and if love could devise something new, we welcomed it. We entered on each joy the more eagerly for our previous inexperience, and were the less easily sated.” Both Abélard and Héloïse are “inexperienced” in love, and as curious

about it as they are of any other new intellectual endeavor. For those two nerdy scholars, lovemaking is a new field of studies they investigate in all its aspects. In this context, the violence of blows is presented as necessary to ensure they fully cover the chapter on eroticism, and just to make sure posterity will not misread him, he adds the blows “were sweeter than any balm could be.” This is a very odd analogy: normally blows cause wounds, and wounds need balm to heal. But Abélard skips the middle term of wounds, going straight from blows to balm. This could mean a whole lot of things, among which that he gave the blows, received the balm and Héloïse is the only one who got wounded. But it also hides the more serious “real” wound of the castration, which he is the only one to have received.

In the 1133 *Historia Calamitatum*, Abélard presents his early courtship with Héloïse in terms of love and studies. Unlike the 1237 *Romance of the Rose* that expresses Love as an immaterial ideal that can only be presented in an allegorical analogy, love and studies both belong to the material world. By de-idealizing love, Abélard uses metaphorical analogies rather than allegorical analogies, and in this sense, Abélard is a modern thinker.

Interestingly, when reading this text, the reader also knows the importance of Abélard and Héloïse’s correspondence, which Abélard does not know at the time. When he writes this account of their meeting, he has been separated from Héloïse for twelve years and they have not yet corresponded with each other. Even this letter was not supposed to be addressed to her, but to one of his friends,<sup>37</sup> and its content may surprise the reader. How could this be one of the greatest love stories in history? Abélard displays an unbearable arrogance in describing himself, while not seeming to care for innocent Héloïse he uses for his pleasure.

But to think that would be to forget whom the recipient is. In her reply, Héloïse blasts through the veils, perverting the meaning Abélard carefully sets up and recuperating the fault as hers, placing her own set of veils as so many traps which he will have to unveil at his turn and so forth as they write back and forth. This pugnacious letter launched by one of the most brilliant logicians of all times is an invitation to a verbal battle in which Héloïse will prove to be a formidable adversary.<sup>38</sup> In that sense, their letters deserve the title of the most extraordinary love affair in history.

**[4] Explain why Abélard cannot make up for his sins of the flesh. What does he ask Héloïse to do for him?**

In letter 2, Abélard had already indicated how Héloïse should pray for their past aberrations, explaining, “We have indeed many examples as evidence of the high

position in the eyes of God and his saints which has been won by the prayers of the faithful, especially those of the women on behalf of their dear ones and of wives for their husbands.”<sup>39</sup> In this passage, Abélard asks Héloïse to take the role of intercessor, pointing how women are especially good at it as we saw to be the case of the Notre-Dame Woman.<sup>40</sup> However, that women would have proved through “examples” to be better at getting their prayers answered, still does not fully explain Abélard’s request. It becomes apparent in his last letter.

The redeeming of Abélard’s fault is problematic, as he points out in letter 4, “But no crown is waiting for me, because no cause for striving remains. The matter for strife is lacking in him from whom the thorn of desire is pulled out.” “The thorn of desire is pulled out” in Abélard because the castration keeps him away from feeling desire. Therefore, he cannot redeem himself for a sin he committed by not committing it anymore—since he does not have that choice any longer. On the other hand, Héloïse still feels desire, and as his wife and one flesh with him, she may be able to redeem him through her prayers. Héloïse can substitute her body and accomplish what he cannot do. Abélard has reached his objective, as Héloïse in her fifth letter only asks for his guidance in leading her convent. Never again does she mention anything about their past.

How about Héloïse: did she get what she wanted from Abélard? It appears to be the case. He made a full list of his offenses, admitting to transgressing the rules of the Church, forcing her with blows into disrespecting the forbidden days for intercourse, and mocking the sacred habit of a nun. This last confession must be especially meaningful to Héloïse, as Abélard conjures up the time they had sex in a corner of the Argenteuil refectory while she was wearing the robe of a nun. In chapter 3, we will see Queen Margot’s erotic dress she keeps to make love to strangers in the street, although in Héloïse’s cases, the fact it is a nun’s robe makes it a perverted signifier and therefore even more erotic. Surely, having him write down erotic scenes that must have been haunting her, must have put down such fantasies to rest on paper.<sup>41</sup>

He also tells her, “Come too, my inseparable companion, and join me in thanksgiving, you who were made my partner both in guilt and in grace.”<sup>42</sup> To be told she is his “inseparable companion” has to be the sweet words Héloïse was waiting for. She now can tell those words at mass and feel Abélard kneeling at her side. She now can softly word them at night when alone in her room, and feel the presence of Abélard sitting at her side. It may be too much to expect that she now sleeps in peace, but at least she can put her resentment to rest. Or does she? The illumination below may show another story.

Observation: Illumination of Abélard and Héloïse, 14C

**Describe their general aspect, as well as elements of symmetry and dissymmetry in the composition of the illumination.**

Abélard looks at Héloïse, and Héloïse looks at Abélard. They are sitting on the same bench, placed symmetrically on each side of a central axis, and turned in a three-quarter view toward the beholder. The axis defines an empty zone, as their arms are folded back within the space of their own body.

The rough symmetry of their bodies contains dissymmetrical elements, most conspicuously in their clothing. They both wear a monastic robe, which in Héloïse's case is black and hides her body in its many folds, showing only her hands and face. She further wears a black veil and white headband. Abélard's robe is pink, with less numerous and more defined folds. It does not hide his arms closely fitted with a red underwear with small white buttons, and his legs and feet fitted in black hoses and soft shoes. This black color sharply contrasts with the pink background of his robe.

Abélard's left leg is crossed over his other leg, a loosely hanging appendage that is rather short in comparison to his foot. A small green hat covers his thick, blond and curly hair, and his beard is shortly trimmed over a naked neck as wide as a football player's.

**Describe the emotions displayed on their face. Why may they differ?**

Their faces are one-quarter turned toward each other, with their eyes turned aside to look at each other. This is even more emphasized in Abélard, whose lifted head forces him to look down at Héloïse from the corner of his eyes. His eyebrows arch up in interrogation or doubt. On the other hand, Héloïse's eyebrows show no expression, although her gaze is as intense as his.

Their noses point toward each other as if in profile, and their mouths are closed, Héloïse's in a small straight line showing no expression while in contrast Abélard's is arched like his eyebrows and underlined by his bottom lip in an inquisitive pout. As we saw to be the case in her letters, we may wonder if her affected calm is symptomatic of a provocation.

**Examine their hand gestures. What kind of triangle do their two open hands form? What do they both point to? How about their two other hands: what do they each point to? How does this triangle differ from the first one?**

Both of their vertical arms present an open hand with a palm pointing at an angle to a higher transcendence, defining a stable isosceles triangle (fig. T2.4, to

the left), as is the case of the Notre-Dame Woman kneeling in prayer (fig. 2.24.). Abélard indicates such a triangular figure in letter 4, addressing it, “To the bride of Christ, Christ’s servant.”<sup>43</sup> Héloïse the “bride” and Abélard the “servant” are located symmetrically on either side of the Christ who belongs to each half of the sentence and defines an interstitial zone that separates and ties them at the same time. For Abélard and after their entrance into the orders, the Christ must be the central figure that mediates their relationship on earth. This is the outward gesture both of them do in the illumination, with an open palm making their profession of faith open to the public.

However, their horizontal arms do not have the same angle, nor do they define a stable triangle. Héloïse’s left hand stretches out toward Abélard’s body at the level of his chest, with its palm hidden from the beholder (fig. T2.4, to the right). She may be pointing with her open right hand to the invisible, immaterial divine spouse she married when taking her vows publicly. But she also points with her hidden left hand to the body of Abélard, displaying the material love she still has for her earthly spouse. She may be outwardly the spouse of the Christ, but she is inwardly the spouse of Abélard. This reflects her self-reproach of hypocrisy when having lewd thoughts while praying at mass, with her inside thoughts contradictory to her outside appearance.<sup>44</sup> She writes at the end of letter 1, “Farewell, my only love,”<sup>45</sup> showing that while she may appear to be the spouse of the Christ, in reality, she only loves Abélard. Her left hand, as it points to Abélard’s body directly and without passing through the Christ mediation is a provocation on Héloïse part that destabilizes the transcendental triangular figure of their two hands pointing symmetrically.

Abélard in turn frowns. On the illumination, his right arm has a steeper incline, and his closed hand offers a disproportionately long index finger, the length of its second and third phalanxes amounting to the total length of the index of his left hand. This index points to Héloïse’s face and veil, as an attempt to redirect the gesture of her left hand toward the veil she took to become the Christ’s bride. Unlike her black dress that did not keep them from copulating in the Argenteuil refectory as Abélard recalls, taking the veil is what bounds Héloïse to the religious life.<sup>46</sup>

Abélard’s finger pointing to Héloïse’s veil, and Héloïse’s hand pointing back to his body but also his pointing hand forms another triangle, which has the veil at its apex. Unlike the isosceles triangle with the Christ at the top, this triangle does not have the transcendental mediation that would bring it stability. On the contrary, its closed circularity between Héloïse and Abélard, Héloïse pointing to Abélard’s body and Abélard pointing to her veil, forms an unstable triangular

shape that remains in the horizontal plane of the human. This circularity is visible as well in the letters, when Héloïse in letter 3 goes back to the veil, “It was your command, not love of God which made me take the veil.”<sup>47</sup> The veil that Abélard points out to Héloïse to remind her who her spouse is from now on, is used by Héloïse to remind Abélard it is himself he points to rather than the Christ since it is his command and not the love of God that made her take the veil to start with.

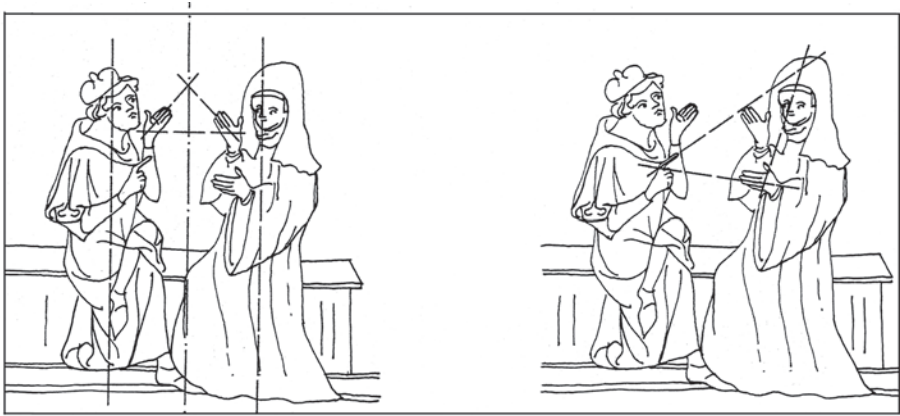


Fig. T2.4. Abélard and Héloïse: stable triangle (left) and unstable triangle (right).

**Examine Abélard’s crossed leg. Given his castration, what may it stand for? On the other hand, what is he doing with his right foot?**

While Abélard’s index finger is of disproportionate length, conversely, his left leg is excessively short and frail. The leg is also emphasized by its black color in high contrast with his pink robe, and looking closely, it furthermore comes out of his robe at the three folds that mark the location of his sex. The leg points to his lack of sex like a black slash signaling the castration, and that by metonymical contiguity receives the appearance of a small dangling appendix. The foot, although large, falls down emasculated.

The tight crossing of his leg also shows a withdrawal, subtracting it from Héloïse’s space and offering her in exchange an index whose excessive length compensates the pettiness of the leg. This gesture explains better the amplitude of Abélard’s request: as a castrated man, he is deprived of the ability to gain salvation, and depends on Héloïse’s prayers for both of them to reach the perfection of the isosceles triangle moderated by Christ. Héloïse will eventually accept his request, but not before he acknowledges her grief and his lack of compassion toward it.

At least this is what may explain a last odd detail in the Illumination. We mentioned how Abélard and Héloïse were separated by a transcendental central axis that created an empty space between them. This is not entirely true. Abélard's right foot crosses this boundary to espouse the shape of Héloïse's robe, which is barely visible given they are both black. Furthermore, this foot does not dangle but stretches out. A scandalous foot—is Abélard making a pass at Héloïse, in a gesture just as provocative as the *Historia Calamitatum* that, however clumsily, nevertheless started it all?

I like to think their feet have joined in a gentle fondling—once again making of her black robe a deliciously sensuous place of transgression, and making her “his inseparable companion,” as they are now in their Père Lachaise grave.

## 2.4 Île de la Cité, West Side: Political Power

Observation: Saint-Louis, Gothic Sainte-Chapelle, 1242–48

Saint-Louis is twelve when becoming king, and his mother Blanche de Castille manages to keep his throne against nobles. After two failed attempts at kidnapping the young king, Blanche is warned of another plot while in Orléans, and rushes toward Paris—but Barons block the road before she has time to reach the capital. She calls the Bourgeois of Paris for help, and when hearing the tocsin, they come en masse flocking the road, and Blanche takes her son in triumph to the Louvre in December 1227. Saint Louis never forgot the help he got from the people of Paris, and while his most exquisite building is the Sainte-Chapelle, he builds many more buildings including the Sorbonne College he co-founded in 1253 at the request of his friend Robert de Sorbon.

**Which elements are missing in the Sainte-Chapelle, and how would it affect the inside appearance of the nave and chancel in comparison with Notre-Dame?**

We saw how Suger unifies the inside of the Saint-Denis Basilica so that light can pervade the building unencumbered. This is even truer of luminous Sainte-Chapelle. While reliquaries are usually kept in crypts, Saint-Louis wants the shrine of the Christ precious relics to be at the upper level—hence a design that turns the Sainte-Chapelle into an oversized gem-encrusted reliquary box. Putting the Sainte-Chapelle and Notre-Dame plans side by side, we see how small the Sainte-Chapelle is with its 36 m length, compared with Notre-Dame's 119 m (fig. T2.5). The Sainte-Chapelle has no transept, side aisles, ambulatory, side-chapels, or radiating chapels. It is only composed of the nave, with the Narthex

at the west and chancel at the east, and the whole Sainte-Chapelle would fit in Notre-Dame's nave section between the transept and the chancel.

Its small size allows arches to span its whole width, forming a single volume seemingly huge because completely unobstructed. It is furthermore a narrow volume with a height twice as big as its width (about 10 m wide for 20 m high), giving an impression of soaring verticality. Since there are no side chapels between buttresses, the stained-glass windows can take up most of the height of the wall (fig. T2.7). This is not the case of any other church, and those high windows are what make the Sainte-Chapelle so uniquely beautiful. As a part of the palace complex, the Sainte-Chapelle has been better protected throughout the centuries, and its stained glass, removed and put away during World War Two, is the oldest to survive in Paris.

**Looking at the plan and outside view, how do you explain that the armature of slender piers is not reinforced by flying buttresses, as is the case in Notre-Dame?**

While Notre-Dame uses stones at their utmost, the Sainte-Chapelle is built “in spite” of stones, with iron rods reinforcing the stone courses as well as bracing the whole structure.<sup>48</sup> What is possible for small Sainte-Chapelle, is impossible for much larger cathedrals that need flying buttresses to counter the weight of the nave vaulting. The sturdiness of the lower chapel (fig. 2.31, plan to the left), also helps with stability.

**Compare the lower chapel and upper chapel plans.**

While above all a reliquary, the Sainte-Chapelle is also conceived as a palace-chapel, consisting of a two-story structure with an upper-level chapel for nobles, and a ground-floor chapel for servants. Those two levels differ considerably, the lower level being designed to provide a solid base to the upper-chapel. Its outer walls are massive and the vault is only 6.6 m high at its highest. Unlike the upper-story, a narrow side-aisle surrounds its periphery. However massive, it is painted in a marvelous polychromy that gives a sense of what Notre-Dame must have looked like when first built (fig. T2.8).

**Observation: Philippe le Bel, Gothic Conciergerie, 1313**

Philippe le Bel sees a danger in the Templars' increasing power, and since they are bankers for pilgrims and merchants, he is also interested by their fortune. As Pope Clement V will not dissolve the Templar order, Philippe le Bel seizes their money and has all the knights of France arrested. The one hundred forty knights in Paris

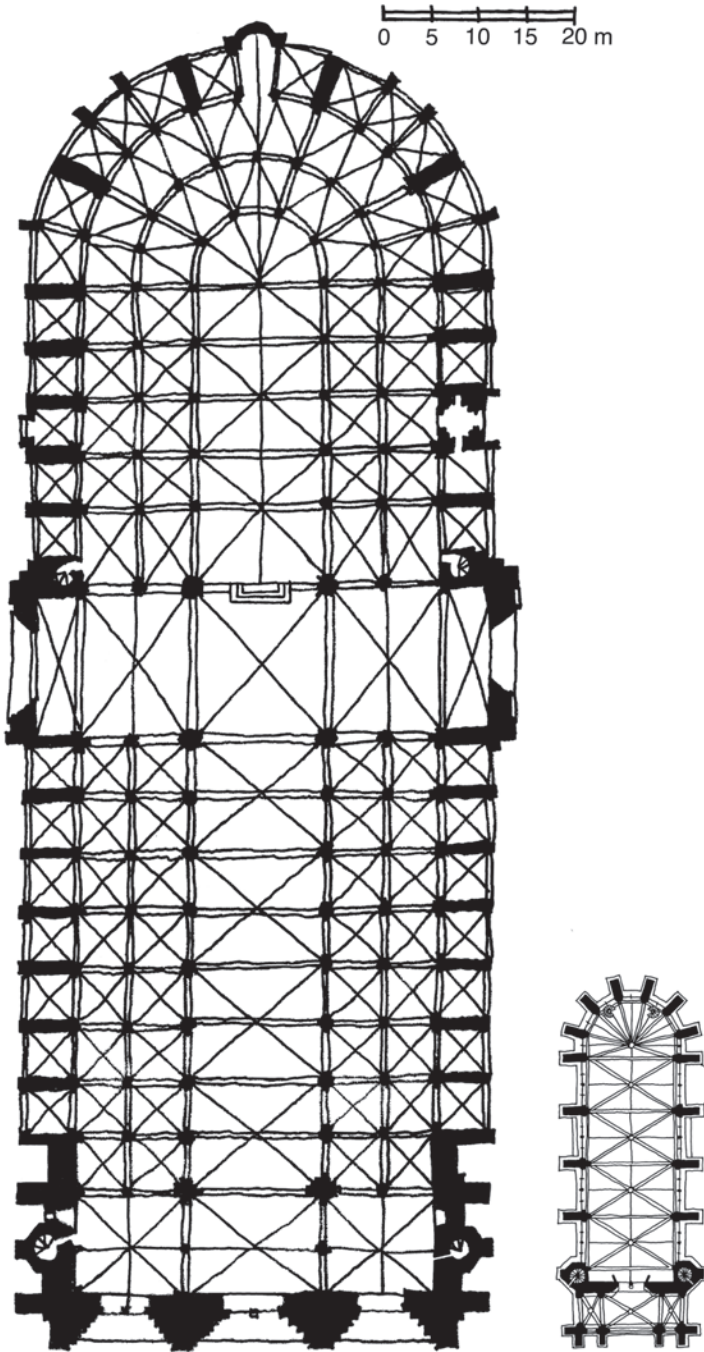


Fig. T2.5. Plans of Notre-Dame and Sainte-Chapelle at the same scale.

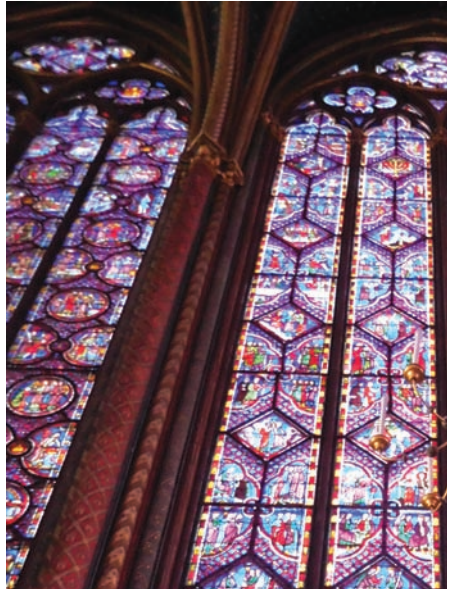


Fig. T2.6–7. Sainte-Chapelle: soaring verticality of upper chapel, outside and inside.



Fig. T2.8. Sainte-Chapelle: polychromy of lower chapel.

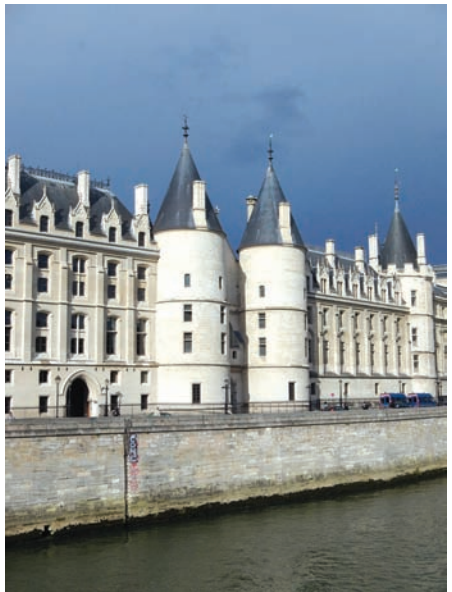


Fig. T2.9. Conciergerie: Tour César and Tour Bonbec.

are trialed and tortured to make them confess their so-called crimes, to no results. After three years, fifty-four are burned, still admitting no crime. After six years, on March 18, 1314, as the night falls down, the great-master Jacques de Molay and one of his companions are brought to one of the little islands at the west of the Île de la Cité, and burnt at the stake without being condemned by any proceeding. André Breton will use this event when describing the Place Dauphine as the sex of Paris, as we will see in chapter 9.

Philippe le Bel also rebuilds the King's Palace on the Île de la Cité in the new Gothic style in 1313. After Charles V moves his residence to the Louvre around 1370, the royal palace is used by the Parliament of Paris and the kingdom's central administrative and judicial offices.<sup>49</sup> The Conciergerie is also the location of the first prison. Figure 2.33 shows the remaining four towers of Philippe le Bel's castle, including the Bonbec Tower to the right where prisoners were tortured. During the French Revolution, 2,600 condemned people spend their last days in the Conciergerie, before being brought to the Place de la Concorde to be guillotined. Rebuilt in the 18C, the rooms now house a historical presentation of the Terror with several cells reconstituted, including Marie-Antoinette's.

#### Extra Material (Oral Presentation, Paper or Test)

Other constructions of the end of the Gothic include the Saint-Séverin Church, rebuilt for the most in 1489 in the flamboyant Gothic style, which is uniquely displayed with its "palm tree," a coiled central pillar at the center of the ambulatory from which spring fourteen vault ribs (fig. T2.10). The Hôtel de Sens (1475–1519, fig. T2.11), commissioned by the archbishops of Sens, resembles a fortress with flamboyant touches in its lanceted entryway framed by two corbelled turrets.

Observation: Limbourg Brothers, *The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*, 1440

#### **Where is the scene located? How does the point of view differ from 1460 Fouquet's *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons*?**

The illustration portrays a scene of haymaking on the Rive Gauche, with the west end of the Île de la Cité in the background. The point of view from the Hôtel de Nesle (the Duc de Berry's Paris residence and the present site of the Institut de France),<sup>50</sup> is similar to the one in 1460 Fouquet's *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons*, although from a lower perspective and centered on the King's Palace and showcasing the Sainte-Chapelle instead of Notre-Dame. It is also the view in *Life of Saint-Denis* in chapter 1, although not showing the bridges.

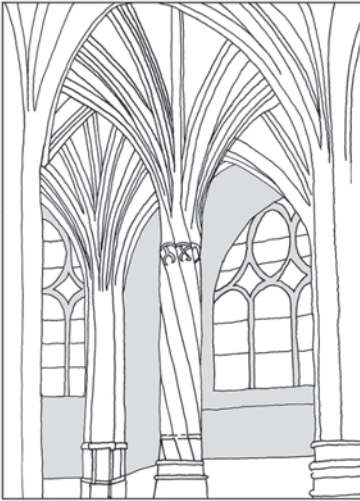


Fig. T2.10. Saint-Séverin Church, 1489: coiled pillar.



Fig. T2.11. Hôtel de Sens, 1475–1519.

**Describe the foreground scene. How is the month of June depicted?**

Three men cut grass with a scythe, leaving the lighter shade of green of the cut hay behind. They pull back their scythe in the same posture, giving a sense of the rhythm and precision needed to cut tall grass in one strike. They work barefooted like the two women to the foreground, one raking the hay and the other picking it up with a pitchfork, adding to the eleven piles neatly lined up like the small trees bordering the Seine. The women in white undergarments and blue dresses display graceful body, while the men dressed in shades of blue, white and red perfectly match the blue and red shingles and white walls of the palace behind.

**Describe the Conciergerie: name the four towers facing the other branch of the Seine that still remain today. Identify the Grande Salle covered by two parallel pointed wooden barrel vaults, rebuilt as the Salle des Pas Perdus in 1618. The original colonnaded Salle des Gens d'Armes lies underneath. Identify the crenelated wall, the garden of the king behind, and the small pavilion on the Seine with stairs leading to a low island where the Templars were burnt.**

When the illumination is painted in 1416, Charles V has moved the royal palace to the Louvre, and the building has been renamed the Conciergerie. A crenelated wall surrounds the one hundred-year-old castle of Philippe le Bel, with in the foreground the small pavilion on the Seine, and the king's garden behind it. To the left, the corner pavilion of the Salle sur l'eau faces the other branch of the

Seine, with the four towers of the Conciergerie that still exist behind: Bonbec (where prisoners are tortured), César and Argent (twin towers with the red roofs), Horloge (the square tower that already has its 1370 clock), and then perpendicularly, the double nave of the Grande Salle (above the Salle des Gens d'Armes), Grosse Tour, and exquisite Sainte-Chapelle.

The garden located in the triangular shape at the west end of the island has an arched walkway and cupola structure covered with vines sticking up above the walls. A man climbs the stairs of the two-story small pavilion on the Seine, located at the point of the triangle. Those stairs lead to the two small islands to the west of the Île de la Cité, where Jacques de Molay and his Templar companions are unjustly burnt by Philippe le Bel in 1314. Today, the Pont Neuf bridges the island at the level of this two-story building, where the statue of Henri IV stands. Near by, another man maneuvers a small boat with an oar, while some more people are visible climbing the outside stairs of the castle, making it a lively scene much like the one in the foreground of *Life of Saint-Denis*.

**Describe the Sainte-Chapelle: piers, pinnacles, rose window and spire. Compare its proportions with Notre-Dame's. What is the effect of its verticality?**

The Sainte-Chapelle dominates the scene with its spire, more elaborate than the present fifth one, topped with a cross shining with the same gold as the one of the calendar it almost touches.<sup>51</sup> The church itself stands high and compact with its 42.5 m height (while only 36 m long), and its slender piers topped with richly carved pinnacles accentuating the vertical thrust upward of the buttresses. The stair towers are visible at the two sides of the gable as two enormous pinnacles. The rose window with a petal pattern, now replaced by a flamboyant tracery, occupies the whole width of the church between its buttresses (instead of a third like Notre-Dame). Its slenderness makes it an architectural prowess, especially since no crack has appeared in seven centuries.

**Describe the vaulted sky, with the stars in the greater sphere, the path of the moon, and the path of the sun at the center. How does this cosmic clock differ from the vaulted sky in *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons* and *Life of Saint-Denis*?**

Like 1460 Fouquet's *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons* and *Life of Saint-Denis*, the top part of the illumination is occupied by a vaulted sky. In the *Very Rich Hours*, the vault displays three cosmic features: the stars in the greater sphere, the path of the moon in the middle, and the path of the sun at the center.

The position of the stars is given through the Zodiac signs, a spherical celestial coordinate system still used in modern astronomy for predicting the positions of the sun, moon and planets within each sign. But while the astronomical constellations vary widely in size, the zodiac signs in astrology are all thirty degrees in length, which is the case as well in 1440 *Very Rich Hours*. The outer layer of June shows the two Zodiac signs Gemini and Cancer, each divided in three decans of ten degrees in the next layer. Those thirty degrees do not correspond to the 28–31 days division in a month, hence Gemini starts at about 18.5 and Cancer ends at about 16.2.<sup>52</sup> The signs themselves are beautifully drawn in a wide blue layer filled with stars.

The middle layers are dedicated to the path of the moon. Unlike stars, the moon and the sun do not have a fixed declination, and the moon changes declination every 27.212 days, going from a positive declination to a negative one in under two weeks. This change is visible in the drawings of upward and downward moon crescents. The numbers below are the martyrological letters for the ecclesiastic lunar calendar. They represent the age of the moon, from new moon to full moon, to dark moon.

Finally, the central layer represents the path of the sun, which divides the month of June in thirty days. At its center, a Christianized version of God Apollo (whose task is to harness his chariot with four horses and drive the sun across the sky), is shown with the tall hat and beard of Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, who recovered the cross relics and gave them back to Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup> Heraclius' sun is located at the center of the sky and given the most visible and important role, which defines the daily rhythm of life today as well.

Although suspiciously mythologized with the sun on a chariot, the dome of the 1440 calendar has the familiarity of a modern planetarium with its stars and constellations shining on it. No more room for little demons as was the case in *Right Hand of God Driving out Demons* and *Life of Saint-Denis*: this is a truly beautiful cosmic clock bringing a sense of order and logic to phenomena that are starting to become of a scientific nature, moving from astrology to astronomy. Looking at this calendar and how enigmatic it is for most of us, may bring one to muse on how disconnected to the cosmic world we mostly have become.

## 2.5 Pissing the Parisians Off: François Rabelais, *Gargantua*, 1534

Rabelais (ca. 1494–1553) as a friar of the Franciscan order studies Greek, Latin, science, philology and law. Becoming known as a humanist, he enters the

Benedictine order, but eventually leaves the monastery to study medicine, which he practices in Lyon.

In 1532 he publishes *Pantagruel*, condemned by the academics at the Sorbonne for their unorthodox ideas, and by the Roman Catholic Church for their derision of certain religious practices. With support from members of the prominent du Bellay family, Rabelais receives approval from King François I<sup>er</sup> to continue publishing his collection.

Observation: Rabelais' Paris

**[1] Describe Rabelais' Paris. What critic does he make of the Catholic Church when writing that a "carrier of indulgences" attracts Parisians more than an "Evangelical" preacher?**

The story of Gargantua's arrival in Paris is part of chapters dedicated to the giant's childhood. The first paragraph gives a portrait of Middle Ages Paris, with its crowd and congestion.<sup>54</sup> Congregations of people take place at a crossroad since at the beginning of the 16C, Paris does not have plazas other than the Place de Grève and the Parvis of Notre-Dame.

Paris is enlivened with small métiers, as is the case in the Paris of *Life of Saint-Denis*, such as a juggler, a carrier of indulgences (see below), a sumpter-horse (a horse or mule that carries baggage), and a fiddler. But in contrast with the laborious Paris of *Life of Saint-Denis*, Rabelais describes the people of Paris "so sottish, so badot, so foolish and fond by nature," that they idle and congress around street entertainment, among which they choose a "carrier of indulgences" over an "Evangelical preacher."

For 16C readers, this is an open critic of the Catholic Church, which considers "indulgences" can help purifying from sin and shortening time spent in purgatory. Indulgences could be granted during life with specific prayers, penance and works of mercy and charity, but progressively become also granted for going on a pilgrimage, putting on processions, and—you guessed it—charitable donations of money. Although raised at first for righteous causes (building churches, hospitals, schools and roads), Catholic leaders increasingly keep a large portion of the money while promising salvation from eternal damnation. This practice of marketing salvation is thought scandalous by many and largely contributes to the rise of the Protestant Reformation.

On the other hand, an "Evangelical preacher" is one who follows the évangiles (English: gospels). As a humanist, Rabelais aligns with the Protestant practice of forging our own understanding of the gospels through our independent reading of the bible and use of our reason. Although criticizing the church practices

of indulgences, his humanism is not in conflict with Christianity, but rather denounces the abuses of the Church.<sup>55</sup>

The syntax reflects this critic of Parisians who prefer to blindly follow abusive Catholic practices rather than take a chance at thinking for themselves. The first sentence accumulates subordinate propositions in the French text (introduced by “après que,” “car,” “que,” “que”), rather than individual and complete sentences. This amalgam of “subordinated” propositions gives the text a broken and confused aspect, just as one imagine Parisians erratically and mindlessly conglomerating in a crowd, “subordinated” to the Catholic Church without any individual judgment of their own. Note that the sentence is “improved” in the English translation with a semicolon that helps to organize it—yet by doing so, it loses the sense of chaos with which the French version portrays Paris.

**[1] What happens on the towers of Notre-Dame? Analyze the comic aspect of the passage.**

Like Victor Hugo’s Esmeralda facing alone the crowd of foolish Parisians persecuting Quasimodo, Gargantua takes refuge in Notre-Dame, which at the beginning of the 16C is the most impressive building in Paris (the Arc de Triomphe and the Tour Eiffel are yet to be built), for its central location, its massive yet soaring height and the spiritual power it conveys. However, this most privileged place compels Gargantua to perform a peculiar action as he “draw[s] out his mental into the open air.” “Mental” comes from Latin *mentula*, which means “penis,” which he “draw[s]” out like he would a sword to engage in a fight with Parisians. Then he “all-to-be-pissed them,” the transcendental towers of Notre-Dame moving Gargantua into doing what most of us would consider a lowliest act—piss.<sup>56</sup>

Gargantua’s esthetic experience is disconcerting. Isn’t “pissing each other off” what cats do when fighting, urinating on the other like they do a property, marking it with a distasteful smell that will long linger? When ascending one of the most beautiful Cathedrals on earth, aren’t we humans supposed to be moved into a spiritual experience of anagogical trips like Suger, turning rose windows like Viollet-le-Duc or any other vertiginous sense of belonging to the cosmic movement of the universe?

Yes, we are, and so does Gargantua for by a glorious metonymic analogy, being on top of Notre-Dame confers his mental the pissing capability of a protruding gargoyle projecting rainwater away from the structure (or fire in Disney’s *Hunchback of Notre-Dame*). It further is as copious in volume as the tower he stands on, drowning “two hundred and sixty thousand four hundred and eighteen, besides

the women and little children.” His flow of urine turns into a murderous river comparable to the Seine with the multitude of drowning it accounts for throughout history, from the 1572 Saint-Bartholomew Massacre to the 17 October 1961 Algerian killings. We will come back on these tragedies, but in the case of Gargantua and his mentul, it is also comical.

The hyperbole of piss flowing in a quantity such that it could become the size of a river brings forth a mental image we know to be a physical impossibility, yet that we can imagine. It is after all only a question of scale, with Gargantua inflating to the size of the Notre-Dame towers serving as a referent. As a little girl, I had a recurrent dream where I would grow as tall as our country house in La Vallée, which brought a few bathroom issues given my giant size. However, most of us outgrow scatological jokes as we master this daily function, and it is rather in its escalating absurdity that the Gargantuan scene is comical.

That someone’s piss would suffice to drown people is implausible, but that it would be “two hundred and sixty thousand four hundred and eighteen” people (260,418) is furthermore impossible, not as much in its enormous quantity as in the precision of the number. It is absolutely ridiculous that one could actually take an exact toll of deaths in the midst of such a sudden and catastrophic event, and this is what makes it so funny.<sup>57</sup>

But Rabelais does not give us time to enjoy the joke as he adds, “besides the women and little children.” The number of 260,418 casualties does not account for women and children, which would more than double it. The excessively precise number happens to not be precise at all, and this is so obviously nonsensical that it sparks a hilarious situation. In this case, it is based on Rabelais’ ability to create the outrageous image of Gargantua pissing a river we are given to visualize, and to drag us in a chain of absurd precisions that propels us into his comic world of words.

Unlike the modern body conceived as a perfectly delimited entity with closed orifices and as little excrescences as possible, when drawing out his mentul and pissing on the Parisians, Gargantua projects part of his body on the outside and becomes part of a larger social body.<sup>58</sup> When Parisians scamper to the highest point of the city to escape drowning, Gargantua’s urine flow further grows beyond the geographical limits of the riverbed and his body takes on the enlarged symbolic significance of a cosmic body. This is a radically different conception from the modern body’s, whose corporal functions (sexuality, eating, drinking, excretion) have taken a narrower significance, limited to the individual body. We will see more pre-modern bodies in chapter 3 with the Saint-Bartholomew Massacre.

**[1] Is the etymological explanation of the name of Paris convincing? Explain.**

Only a few Parisians manage to escape the piss-flood, “sweating, coughing, spitting and out of breath.” They too participate in the social body, spitting Gargantua’s urine to which they mix some of their own fluid in the form of sweat, snot and saliva. Words also come out as spitting: “Carimari, carimara: golynolo, golynolo. By my sweet Sanctesse, we are washed in sport, sport truly to laugh at; a—in French, *Par ris*.” The English translation note explains those are “confused, senseless sounds,” indicating that out of breath Parisians are not able to express themselves in a coherent way. However, “Carimari” presents an anagram of Paris: *c/ari, m/ari, p/aris*, words exchanging syllables in a manner reminiscent of the way bodies exchange fluid (Parisians spitting out Gargantua’s urine). Out of this nonsense comes out “par ris,” literally meaning “by laugh,” that is the good joke of Gargantua pissing the Parisians off by making fun of their stupidity in a flood of words as potent as urine.

Rabelais then explains, “*Par ris*, for which that city hath been ever since called Paris.” Rabelais makes use of an unclear etymology of the name Paris (generally accepted today as coming from its early Celtic inhabitants, the Parisii), and not only does he piss the Parisians off, but he claims the event to be at the source of the city’s name. While the proposed etymology of “par ris” is obviously absurd, Rabelais still points out its unclear origin and how the proud Parisians are bastards.

Creating “Par ris” by simply dividing the word into two syllables also refers to the 16C humanists’ attempt at finding a language “better applied to things,” which often only brings abusive explications founded on arbitrary analogies.<sup>59</sup> It is the case of “Par ris” but also the rest of the paragraph. The note 7 of the French text explains, “Strabon, 1C Greek geographer, never said the name of Lutece came from the Greek adjective *leukos* (white).” Likewise, note 8 indicates, “The book ‘de copiositate reverentiarum’ and its author are imaginary, but this etymology is to be found in many erudite writers, including Rabelais himself.”<sup>60</sup>

Even though Rabelais supports etymological spelling that reflects the origin of words, by using false references he also points out to unfounded analogies. In 1534, French is not a fixed language as it will become a few years later with the poets of The Pleiade, and in particular Du Bellay’s 1549 *La Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française*. Rabelais in his creative exploration of a language in mutation reflects the difficulty to transition from a Middle Ages to a Renaissance society. This transition is most visible socially in the wars of religion that divide France the greatest part of the 16C as we will see in chapter 3.

**[2–3] Look at how Parisians are presented in the episode of the stolen bells.**

Gargantua then considers the bells of Notre-Dame, which “sound very harmoniously,” indicating an appreciation such that he devises to put them around his mare’s neck. The change of scale that had brought Gargantua’s mentul to a cosmic dimension now works in reverse, reducing the great bells to mere cowbells. As a result, “All the city was risen up in sedition,” which Rabelais explains is common with Parisians “upon any slight occasion.” This is funny, because so true throughout Paris’ history. We will see in chapter 3 how kings favored the Louvre location at the border of the city so that they could escape when Parisians decided it was time for an insurrection. And likewise today Parisians are known to march the streets, especially in May when a beautiful weather can be enjoyed. In the case of the stolen bells, Parisians gather at the tower of Nesle, giving the opportunity for more mocking of the Parisians’ drawn out inefficient arguing. Finally, they call on Master Janotus de Bragmardo, “The oldest and most sufficient of the faculty,” which gives Rabelais an opportunity to criticize the Sorbonne.<sup>61</sup>

At the brink of the 16C Wars of Religions, Rabelais presents the stupidity of Parisians, whose very name comes from “Par ris” or “by laugh,” which is a joke. Their fault is to prefer congregating around a carrier of indulgences rather than an Evangelical preacher, revealing their inclination to blindly follow abusive Catholic practices rather than take a chance at thinking on their own. On the other hand, freethinking Gargantua faces the crowd by himself, drowning them in a piss-flood. This flood is premonitory: we will see how thirty-eight years later, a drowning of such amplitude takes place in Paris during the Saint Bartholomew Massacre. Rather than a flow of urine, the Seine becomes coagulated with the Protestants’ blood shed through the murderous stupidity of the Catholic Parisian crowd.

## Notes

1. Christian Norberg-Schulz further describes medieval cities as organisms, with the church as its delicate heart, “La ville médiévale, en général, peut être comparée à un organisme vivant, dont le mur serait l’enveloppe dure, l’église, le coeur délicat, et dont les habitations, dans la zone intermédiaire, participeraient de l’un et de l’autre.” *La Signification dans l’architecture occidentale* (Bruxelles: Pierre Margada, 1977), 187.
2. Saint Bernard could not tolerate Suger’s ostentation: “I shall not mention the astonishing height of oratories, their exaggerated length and excessive width, the sumptuous manner in which they are decorated and painted, so that the onlooker is curious to gaze on them, and the attention of the faithful is distracted and they are less

disposed to self-communion [...]” Georges Duby, *The Age of the Cathedrals. Art and Society, 980–1420*, trans. Leveux and Thompson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 122.

3. Suger comes back explicitly to this difference when writing in XXXI, “That which is signified pleases more than that which signifies,” differentiating the “signified” (in this case the “heavenly table” and of a divine nature) and the “that which signifies” (in this case the altar in the upper chancel, and of a human nature).
4. Leviticus 26:1, International Standard Version.
5. Concerning the unification of spaces, Matthew M. Reeve gives a wonderful description of the chancel at the east side, stressing the unity brought by the Gothic design, “The arrangement at Saint-Denis in every respect attempts to present the whole area as a series of interpenetrating spaces amounting almost to a single space. The apses of the contiguous chapels form a single undulating outer limit of masonry and glass, enclosing the spaces of the two ambulatories which flow freely round the slim columnar supports. Seen from the center of the apse chord, the amount of masonry is reduced to a minimum, leaving visible little more than the spandrels and columns of the apse arcade. It is as if the intention were to dematerialize the structure.” *Reading Gothic Architecture* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008), 17. Dominique Poirel also shows how Suger’s desire to simplify and unify the new chancel of his basilica corresponds to Master Hugues’ Victorine doctrine, where themes of unity and clarity are associated. “Symbolice et anagoge: l’école de Saint-Victor et la naissance du style gothique,” in *L’Abbé Suger, le manifeste gothique de Saint-Denis et la pensée Victorine*, ed. Dominique Poiret (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), 149. Concerning his theology of light, Suger based it on readings he thought to be from Saint-Denis himself, which he confused with Dionysius the Aeropagite. See Paul Halsall for instance, “We encounter another Dionysius in Acts 17:34, converted during Paul’s brief missionary visit to Athens. Five centuries later [...] an anonymous Syrian theologian fascinated by the religious symbolism of light wrote a series of treatises which were attributed to the Dionysius of Acts 17:34. Eventually all the elements were combined [...]” “Abbot Suger, *On What was Done during his Administration*,” in *Medieval Sourcebook* (Fordham University, January 1996) [halsall@murray.fordham.edu](mailto:halsall@murray.fordham.edu). See also how while staying in Saint-Denis after his tragic love-story with Héloïse, and based on some reading, Abélard got in trouble for questioning whether Saint-Denis, instead of famous Dionysius the Areopagite mentioned in the bible as Saint-Paul’s disciple, would have been Dyonysius of Corinth. See the humoristic portrait of the great philosopher by Panofsky, and how he managed to escape from prison. Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger, on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*. Edited, translated and annotated by Erwin Panofsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948–79), 17.
6. Alain Erlande-Brandenburg describes Suger as pushing the work along at astounding speed, in architecture as well as in all details, requiring to find men of talents,

looking for painters in different regions, and stained-glass windows painters in different nations. “Saint-Denis. Le manifeste de l’abbé Suger,” in *L’Abbé Suger, le manifeste gothique de Saint-Denis et la pensée victorine*, 21. Panofsky indicates also how Gothic Architecture expresses the Scholastic thought in its organization into a principle of divisibility, “The second requirement of Scholastic writing, ‘arrangement according to a system of homologous parts and parts of parts,’ is most graphically expressed in the uniform division and subdivision of the whole structure. Instead of the Romanesque variety of western and eastern vaulting forms, often appearing in one and the same building (groin vaults, rib vaults, barrels, domes, and half-domes), we have the newly developed rib vault exclusively so that the vaults of even the apse, the chapels and the ambulatory no longer differ in kind from those of the nave and transept.” *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 45–46.

7. Panofsky explains, “the insistent play upon the words *clarere*, *clarus*, *clarificare*, which almost hypnotizes the mind into the search for a significance hidden beneath their purely perceptual implications, reveals itself as metaphysically meaningful when we remember that John the Scot [...] had explicitly decided for *claritas* as the most adequate rendering of the numerous Greek expressions with which the Pseudo-Areopagite denotes the radiance or splendor emanating from the ‘Father of the lights.’” *Abbot Suger, on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 23.
8. Panofsky writes with great humor, “There is no denying, in spite (or, rather, because) of his persistent protestations to the contrary, that Suger was animated by a passionate will to self-perpetuation. To put it less academically: he was enormously vain.” *Abbot Suger, on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 29. Duby is likely moved into writing, “When we read Suger’s descriptions of his construction projects and achievements, we can feel him quivering with vanity.” *The Age of the Cathedrals. Art and Society, 980–1420*, 111.
9. Poirel likewise indicates how the theme of clarity in Gothic architecture expresses a dialectic between visible and invisible, “De part et d’autre, le thème de la clarté donne bien moins lieu à une opposition traditionnelle entre la lumière et les ténèbres, comme dans certains édifices romans, qu’à une dialectique moins dramatique et plus confiante entre le visible et l’invisible.” “Symbolice et anagogice,” 147.
10. Gemstones have unique properties: they can refract light, bend it, reflect it, change the color and cause optical illusions. They are all translucent with colors in their purest form, except for the colorless diamond that sparkles, breaks down light into its constituent rainbow colors (dispersion), chops it up into bright little pieces (scintillation), and delivers it to the eye (brilliance). The color is due to the nature of light itself. Daylight is all of the colors of the spectrum combined, and when it strikes a material, most of it is absorbed while a smaller amount of a particular frequency or wavelength is reflected. The part that is reflected reaches the eye as the perceived color. A ruby appears red because it absorbs all the other colors of white light (green and blue), while reflecting the red.

11. I am not pushing this reading of a self-hypnosis, but Suger's experience fits very well with the definition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* of hypnosis as "a special psychological state with certain physiological attributes, resembling sleep only superficially and marked by a functioning of the individual at a level of awareness other than the ordinary conscious state." In the case of Suger, his state resembles sleep in that he is called "away from external care," which allows him to block out outside sources of distraction. It also helps him heightening his focus and gives him the ability to concentrate intensely on a specific thought, in his case a religious experience.
12. See Duby's explanations, *The Age of the Cathedrals. Art and Society, 980–1420*, 99–100. Also, this process is not unlike the Big Bang and Big Crunch theory, although in a continuous rather than successive form.
13. The ribbed vaulting has "ribs," which is an armature of piped masonry edging the vault (as opposed to groin vault that has no ribs).
14. Erik Inglis describes a similar contrast in the depiction of Boucicaut Master's 1415 Châteauroux Breviary, although in only two plans, "In the stylistic vocabulary of the earlier picture, however, the status of the major figures was shown by making them larger than the generic Parisians, and placing them higher on the page; the combination of these two techniques compromised the picture's spatial unity. The Boucicaut Master, in contrast, sets his larger figures in the lower section, creating a foreground set off from the background by the city wall, the reduced scale of its buildings, and the painter's use of atmospheric perspective." *Jean Fouquet and the Invention of France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 148–49.
15. For a beautiful book on Notre-Dame, see *Notre-Dame de Paris: La Grâce d'une Cathédrale*, ed. Bernard Reumaux (Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 2012). Displayed in the Notre-Dame bookstore and too heavy to bring back to the States, I took copious notes on the spot under the eyes of most patient shopkeepers. The chapter on the west facade, by Jean-Pierre Cartier, Odile Pinard and Régis Singer, is particularly useful.
16. From left to right, they are: Joachas, Jehu, Joram, Ochozias, Achab, Amry, Jambry, Ela, Fraasa, Nadab, Jeroboam, Isboseth, Saül, David, Salomon, Roboam, Abrham, Asa, Josaphat, Joram, Ochozias, Joas, Amasias, Joatham, Achaz, Ezechias, Manasse and Amon.
17. Thierry Crépin-Leblond speaks of the Gallery of the Kings as both tempering and augmenting the verticality of the facade: "La sensation de verticalité est à la fois tempérée et accrue par la galerie des Rois, qui sert d'assise au deuxième niveau, et surtout par la Grande Gallerie, qui assure la transition vers les tours et leur équilibre horizontal." *La Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris* (Paris: Editions du patrimoine, 2007), 37.
18. Georges Duby explains how the crenelated towers are meant to convey the sovereign authority based on armed strength, since the king was above all a military leader. *The Age of the Cathedrals. Art and Society, 980–1420*, 100.
19. See Michael Camille about Viollet-le-Duc's renovation, and especially how some pre-eminent aspects of Notre-Dame, such as the gargoyles, are his creation, "The most

- famous of them all is the horned, winged demons who gazes over the left buttress on the front of the north tower, his hands resting pensively on his chin, his tongue protruding. The ‘star’ of our story, he broods over this book, the unique and single most memorable creation of the nineteenth-century restorer and architectural theorist Viollet-le-Duc. Though not a gargoyle in the proper sense of the term (since he does not serve as a drainpipe) he has nonetheless become the very essence of gargoyleness, the quintessence of the modern idea of the medieval.” *The Gargoyles of Notre-Dame: Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), Ix-x. See more about Viollet-le-Duc as a theorist in chapter 6.
20. Painton Cowen, *The Rose Window, Splendor and Symbol* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 89. The book has exquisite photos and gives a superlative overview of the evolution of rose windows.
  21. Those towers in French villages are still visible from afar, rising above fields as guides to travelers. Marcel Proust made beautiful descriptions of such towers in *Swann in Love*.
  22. See the intriguing article by Andrew J. Tallon, where he uses “spatial archeology” to identify building deformations (with the help of a laser connected to a computer that records them), and concludes that contrary to common knowledge, Notre-Dame’s flying buttresses do not date back to 1180, but 1170, and therefore would be part of the original structure, rather than an after-thought. “Archéologie spatiale, le bâtiment gothique relevé (et révélé) par laser,” in *Architecture et sculpture gothiques: renouvellement des méthodes et des regards*, eds. Stéphanie Diane Daussy and Arnaud Timbert (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012).
  23. See Pierre Ripert for the symbolic explanation of the objects they hold, in *Le Bestiaire des Cathédrales* (Paris: Editions de Vecchi, 2004), 91.
  24. John W. Baldwin offers the following description of the emaciated woman, “The most violent image was appropriately placed in hell at the Judgment scene; the emaciated body of a naked and blindfolded woman is placed astride a trunk, where her anus is threatened by a man’s serpentine genitals from below.” *Paris, 1200* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 90. The “serpentine genitals” is a valid option, but even on his picture the horsetail is unmistakable for a trunk.
  25. Saint-Bernard banished art that he considered dangerous, and wrote beautifully how much he knew the temptation of looking at the monster in marbles over studying books: “And further, in the cloisters, under the eyes of the brethren engaged in reading, what business has there that ridiculous monstrosity, that amazing misshapen shapeliness and shapely misshapeness? Those unclean monkeys? Those fierce lions? Those monstrous centaurs? Those semi-human beings? Those spotted tigers? Those fighting warriors? Those huntmen blowing their horns? Here you behold several bodies beneath one head; there again several heads upon one body. Here you see a quadruped with the tail of a serpent; there a fish with the head of a quadruped. There an animal suggests a horse in front and half a goat behind; here a horned beast exhibits the rear part of a horse. In fine, on all sides there appears so rich and so amazing a

variety of forms that it is more delightful to read the marbles than the manuscripts, and to spend the whole day in admiring these things, piece by piece, rather than in meditating on the Law Divine.” *Apologia ad Willelmum*, cited by Panofsky, *Abbot Suger, on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 25. Saint-Bernard was contemporary of Suger, and opposite in his conception of monasticism as a life of utter self-denial with respect to personal comfort, food and sleep. Meanwhile Suger thought his duty to improve the physical wellbeing of his monks, as well as indulging them in a delicious dinner once a month.

26. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”
27. Unlike the Greek creatures whose monstrosity is controlled (Cyclops with one eye, Sphinx as a woman/lioness, satyrs and fauns as man/goat, centaur as man/horse, triton as man/fish), the satanic creatures multiply the intermix, with many species involved. In nature, mix of species usually does not allow fecundation (unless the species are very close, like a horse and a donkey, but then their offspring, the mule, is sterile). That type of fecundation is an infraction to the laws of nature, and therefore satanic.
28. Cowen connects the “coherent” design of the rose window with Thomas Aquinas concern with order, citing Aquinas: “The divine nature keeps all things in their proper order, without confusion, in such a manner that all are linked together in a concrete coherence, each retaining its specific purity.” *The Rose Window, Splendor and Symbol*, 200.
29. This is the case for instance of his conception of humans as body and soul. A body is a “material substance,” and the soul is a “substantial form”—it is a part of the substance, but not the substance itself. The soul exists separately from the body and continues to exist after bodily death. Note that this can be nicely combined with the Augustinian conception of God as a “spiritual substance,” as presented by William Mallard, my most beloved teacher, on Augustine in *Language and Love, Introducing Augustine’s religious Thought through the Confessions Story* (Pennsylvania, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 69.
30. Here is Saadi comparing the ephemeral roses to his collected work:
 

Of what use will be a dish of roses to thee?  
Take a leaf from my rose-garden.  
A flower endures but five or six days  
But this rose-garden is always delightful.
31. Cowen explains how the proportion of glass to stone in the west rose surpasses anything that had been done before: “But what is really daring is that every other colonette of the outer group of twenty-four is set on top of a trilobed arch, displaying the confidence of the master mason in the ability of this structure to transmit the loads of glass, stone and metal—in the upper panels, at least—safely through the system.

- Combined with a thinner, lighter, more uniform tracery, the overall effect is one of grace and refinement.” *The Rose Window, Splendor and Symbol*, 90.
32. The result in architecture is that number 3 (God) and 12 (incarnation) govern the rose design. This is obscure for most of us, but in the bible numerology for instance, 3 = trinity; 4 = creation of material world (4 seasons, 4 cardinal points, 4 elements ...); 7 = 4 + 3: 7 days of creation = number of the plenitude, of achieved/completed world; 8 = broken plenitude, which is the fall—but also the day of redemption. 12 = 3 × 4 = incarnation—12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, 12 months, etc.
  33. See how Euclid’s approach enabled essential geometric figures to be drawn only using a ruler and a compass in Cowen’s delightful drawings. *The Rose Window, Splendor and Symbol*, 246–47.
  34. This is likely what Viollet-le-Duc experienced as a small child, bringing a fascination with Gothic architecture that eventually lead him to renovate Notre-Dame.
  35. Mary Martin McLaughlin observes, “In 1129, the enterprising and powerful Abbot Suger, supported by what we now think were forged documents and questionable charges of misbehavior, laid successful claim to Héloïse’s abbey on behalf of his own. Héloïse, after more than a decade in this abbey in Argenteuil, where she was then prioress, was expelled with its other nuns. Seeing in Héloïse’s plight an opportunity to provide for her as well as for his deserted Paraclete, Abélard invited her there with a group of her faithful companions from Argenteuil.” *The Letters of Héloïse and Abélard, a Translation of their Collected Correspondence and Related Writings* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 4. See also Panofsky’s passage on Suger’s relationship with Abélard he calls “a genius of that paranoiac sort,” in *Abbot Suger, on the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 17–18.
  36. Roland Denise Oberson interprets Fulbert’s unusual love for Héloïse by suggesting he is her incestuous father who got her pregnant, and who invites Abélard to live under his roof to blame him with her pregnancy. According to Oberson, Abélard accepts the deal to get Héloïse out of his reach, and when taking her away, he inflames Fulbert to the point that he has him castrated. *Héloïse et Abélard, à singulière esclave, maître spécial* (Paris: Herremann Éditeurs, 2010).
  37. Betty Radice writes about the veracity of the friend, “If it was a genuine, personal letter of consolation to an unnamed friend and fellow-monk, as Abélard says, one wonders why it went further than him. It seems more probable that Abélard intended it for circulation (there may have been more than one copy) in order to win sympathy for his predicament and to pave the way for release from St Gildas so that he could return to his true vocation of teaching.” Introduction, *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Book, 1974), 25.
  38. Claire Nouvet shows for instance how Héloïse humiliates herself to demonstrate her own mastery and put Abélard in the position of the debtor. *Abélard et Héloïse, la passion de la maîtrise* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2009), 179–216.

39. *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 120.
40. Peggy Kamuf writes about intercession, “Thus, in the rest of the letter, he writes as spiritual adviser to the monastery, reminding the Abbess Héloïse of the scriptural precedents which demonstrate the special power of women’s prayers to win mercy of the Lord. He presents a cluster of biblical examples, illustrating the number of times women interceded successfully for the men they loved. It is such an intercession on his own behalf that Abélard hopes Héloïse and her sisters will make the object of their prayers.” *Fictions of Feminine Desire. Disclosures of Héloïse* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 21.
41. Radice suggests, “Human love such as hers does not end with separation or the death of the beloved, but it changes in quality as the physical pangs of severance are blunted; at least it seems unlikely that a woman of her character and common sense allowed herself the indulgence of brooding over the irrevocable past.” *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 44.
42. *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 149.
43. *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 137.
44. Héloïse claims her hypocrisy, “Men call me chaste, they do not know the hypocrite I am. They consider purity of flesh a virtue, though virtue belongs not to the body but to the soul.” *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 133.
45. *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 118.
46. Abélard describes the scene in the Argenteuil refectory, “After our marriage, when you were living in the cloister with the nuns at Argenteuil and I came one day to visit you privately, you know what my uncontrollable desire did with you there, actually in a corner of the refectory, since we had nowhere else to go.” *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 146. The dramatic scene of Héloïse taking the veil while crying and claiming Cornelia’s lament is in *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 76–77.
47. *The Letters of Abélard and Héloïse*, 134.
48. Ayers explains the technical feat of the stone structure: “The secret of the Sainte-Chapelle’s sturdiness and compactness and, as we shall see, of its extraordinary fenestration, is iron. A veritable system of ‘reinforced stones’ was employed to hold the blocks in place, each course being clamped together with iron hooks. Furthermore, two courses of iron tie rods run round the upper chapel, bracing the entire structure, with further such rods located in the roof space above the vault.” Andrew Ayers, *The Architecture of Paris: an Architectural Guide* (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 2004), 24–25.
49. See a history of the Royal Palace during the Middle Ages in Philippe Lorentz and Dany Sandron, *Atlas de Paris au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Parigramme, 2006), 80–87; and a detailed description and plan of the 15C Palace in Etienne Hammon, *Une Capitale flamboyante. La création monumentale à Paris autour de 1500* (Paris: Picard, 2011), 48–57.
50. For more information about the *Very Rich Hours* calendar, see Jonathan Alexander, “Labeur and Paresse: Ideological Representations of Medieval Peasant Labor,” *Art*

*Bulletin* 72 (1990), 443–52; and Lillian Schacherl, *Très Riches Heures, Behind the Gothic Masterpiece* (Munich: Prestel, 1997), 36–41. For a history of the manuscript, see Timothy B. Husband, introduction to *Les Belles Heures du Duc de Berry* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2012), 11–18.

51. Inglis indicates how the Sainte-Chapelle is staged, “The lower viewpoint makes the complex more imposing by placing it against the sky and, by eliminating the distant towers of Notre-Dame, allows the spire of the Sainte-Chapelle to rise unchallenged to the highest point in the frame.” *Jean Fouquet and the Invention of France*, 168.
52. Thanks to my sister Corine Peyron, for explaining the astrological organization of this beautiful vaulted sky. Note that the first decan is colored by the previous sign, the second is fully within the sign, the third colored by the sign to come.
53. This drawing would have been in part inspired by a medal of Emperor Heraclius (610–41) acquired by the Duke of Berry. According to the Legend of the True Cross, as Heraclius enters the astrological tower in Ctesiphon, he finds Chosroes II sitting at his mechanical throne, kept in constant movement by horses, just as the universe is constantly moving. Into the throne, Chosroes had placed the cross relic “as the sun,” and an image of a cock “as the ghost.” Heraclius decapitates Chosroes on his throne and restitutes the cross to Jerusalem.
54. Mireille Huchon raises the question of whether Rabelais stayed in Paris, concluding, “un séjour parisien paraît probable. Il est sûr que Rabelais a quitté l’habit de bénédictin pour l’habit séculier, comme il le mentionne dans des suppliques ultérieures au pape, mais la date en reste inconnue. Peut-être est-ce l’époque où il eut deux enfants naturels d’une veuve parisienne, François et Junie, légitimés par Paul III le 9 janvier 1540.” *Rabelais* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 110.
55. Kathleen Perry Long points out how Rabelais’ critic of Catholicism is hazardous in 1534 Paris: “Religious repression escalated after the Affaire des Placards (1534), when posters against Catholic mass were posted all around Paris and elsewhere in France. In January 1535, an elaborate procession was held, in the course of which Francis I demonstrated his devotion to the Catholic faith, and six converted heretics were burned at the stake.” *Rabelais Encyclopedia*, ed. Elizabeth Chesney Zegura (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 183–84.
56. Terence Cave looks at the cornucopia as an image for Rabelais’ text, one aspect attached to the theme of sexual performance, but also as it presages an emptying-out, which are both present in the mental pissing-out, “[...] the eight chapters of each of the first two books complement one another in their thematization of the generative movement at a sexual level, uncovering the erosion and death which this movement necessarily carries with it, and reflecting the productivity of the text as it begins to be written. At the same time, the duplicity of writing, its tendency to enact the cornucopian movement as an emptying out rather than a filling up, is adumbrated, but at least partially disguised.” *The Cornucopian Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 188–89.

57. Bakhtine likewise underlines the implausible aspect of Rabelais' comic, although basing it on the contrasting feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction it provokes in the reader. He takes as an example the passage where frère Jean affirms about the tower of another church, "only the shadow of an abbey tower is fecund," "[...] le sentiment d'insatisfaction vient de ce que l'image est impossible et invraisemblable: on ne peut imaginer qu'une femme soit engrossée par l'ombre d'un clocher d'abbaye, etc. Et c'est cette impossibilité, cette inconcevabilité, qui crée un vif sentiment d'insatisfaction. Néanmoins ce dernier est vaincu par une double satisfaction: premièrement nous reconnaissons dans cette image outrée la dépravation et l'immoralité effectives qui règnent dans les monastères, c'est-à-dire que nous replaçons cette image dans la réalité; deuxièmement nous éprouvons une satisfaction morale, car cette immoralité et cette dépravation sont fustigés au moyen de la caricature et de la ridiculisation." Mikhail Bakhtine, *L'Œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et sous la Renaissance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 304.
58. Jean Baudrillard indicates how in the modern, enclosed body, the ideal skin should have no extruding hair, and its pores be unified through tanning, "L'exemple parfait en était la femme peinte en or, du film *Goldfinger* (James Bond): tous orifices bouchés, c'est le maquillage radical, qui fait de son corps un phallus impeccable [...] Mais il en est ainsi de toute peau dans l'esthétique fonctionnelle, dans la culture de masse du corps. Collants, gaines, bas, gants, robes et vêtements 'près du corps,' sans compter le bronzage: c'est toujours le leitmotiv de la 'seconde peau,' c'est toujours la pellicule transparente qui vient vitrifier le corps." *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 161–62. Bakhtine indicates about the phallus in Rabelais, "C'est pourquoi le rôle essentiel est dévolu dans le corps grotesque à ses parties, ses *endroits*, où *il se dépasse, franchit ses propres limites, met en chantier un autre (ou second) corps: le ventre et le phallus*; ce sont ces parties du corps qui sont l'objet de prédilection d'une *exagération positive*, d'une hyperbolisation [...]. Tous ces *excroissances* et *orifices* sont caractérisés par le fait qu'ils sont le lieu où sont *surmontées les frontières entre deux corps et le corps et le monde, où s'effectuent les échanges et les orientations réciproques*" (Bakhtine's italics). *L'Œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et sous la Renaissance*, 315.
59. François Rigolo explains in this sense, "Les humanistes, dans leur quête d'un nouveau mode d'expression reflétant de nouvelles valeurs, chercheraient à réduire l'opacité entre les mots et les choses, à annuler ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui la 'béance' entre signifiant et signifié." "Cratylisme et Pantagruélisme: Rabelais et le statut du signe," *Études Rabelaisiennes* XIII (1976), 117.
60. Notes 7 and 8 are in Rabelais, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 89. Trans. May Spangler.
61. E. Brice Hayes demonstrates how Janotus "becomes a *trompeur trompé* because he makes the fatal error of revealing his true motivation." *Rabelais's Radical Farce. Late Medieval Comic Theater and its Function in Rabelais* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 119.



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Fig. T11.1: Ophélie Peyron.

## About the Author



Fig. T11.1. Photo of the author taken by Ophélie Peyron, at the 1213 Philippe Auguste Wall on the Rue Clovis.

**May Spangler** was born and raised in Paris, where she graduated with a Master's degree in architecture from the École des Beaux-Arts. During her senior year, she received a scholarship to study at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where she met Dickie Spangler.

She also received a Ph.D. in French at Emory University in Atlanta where she taught for eleven years. Her publications include critical essays and short stories combining her interest in literature and architecture, and she is the author of a novel published in 2016, *Papa a dit, Maman aussi*. Visit her at [fb.me/MaySpanglerAuthor](https://fb.me/MaySpanglerAuthor), [emory.academia.edu/MaySpangler](https://emory.academia.edu/MaySpangler), and on [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com/in/may-spangler).