studying them one notices a convention which is repeatedly used: that is, an insistence upon circular and oval forms in the folds of the drapery. Typically the cloth seems to cling to a smooth area of the body, as if wet, and is then surrounded by freer folds which outline the round form in concentric fashion. The circular motif on the chest of the Christ Child, the similar one on the left shoulder of the Madonna and the larger oval just below at the breast are illustrative of a rounded pattern which appears eleven times in our statue. Its function is to isolate particular parts of the anatomy, the shoulder, the elbow, the abdomen, the hip, the knee and the breast. Singling out and giving formal emphasis to certain prominent parts of the body, even if they are joints of articulation and mobility such as the hip or knee, certainly tends to destroy any suggestion of natural, organic unity. Such a process may be observed both in very primitive stages of a style and in the reduction which often comes in a late phase, particularly in provincial works.[3] In either case the result is completely contrary to a naturalistic mode of expression. Such a predilection for circularity in drapery design is surely derived from earlier stylizations in Romanesque sculpture, for ovals in series and repeated circular forms are very common in Romanesque stone relief. The famous sculptures which decorate the church of the Madeleine at Vézelay are a familiar case in point.

In comparing the Mabon Madonna with other wood Madonnas of the twelfth century, one notes immediately that the statue has little in common with the Madonnas produced in Auvergne in the third quarter of the twelfth century, which are marked by a rhythmically linear drapery style.[4] Although closer analogy is found in the Madonnas which come from the vicinity of Paris (cf. the Madonna in the Fogg Museum, Cambridge; the Madonna from St. Martin-des-Champs, Paris, now at St. Denis),[5] the Mabon Madonna lacks certain Ile-de-France features such as a crown, a high-backed throne, a drapery schema marked by radial folds about the neck and thin vertical folds about the head, and, even more important, lacks a progressive attitude toward the plasticity of the figure. A wooden Madonna in the Worcester Museum does give a hint of possible provenance, however.[6] Though surely later in date than our statue, it has the same basic iconography, the same one piece construction — hollowed out in the back — and it is made of the same wood, namely walnut. More important, there is the same circular fold at the breast so significant in the Mabon Madonna.

The Worcester Madonna reputedly comes from the Cathedral of Autun.[7] Thus led to Burgundy, one finds other statues with similar characteristics, particularly the unusual circular folds. The Madonna known as Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Espoir, which I believe dates from the middle of the twelfth century, contemporary with the lost statues of St. Bénigne, Dijon, and those of