Matthew Paris, Visual Exegesis, and Apocalyptic Birds in Royal MS. 14 C. VII

Dorothy Kim

At the British Library’s 2011-2012 exhibition, ‘Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination’, Matthew Paris’s maps from London, British Library, Royal MS. 14 C. VII (hereafter, Royal 14 C. VII) were very popular. On a computer screen nearby, an accompanying interactive feature – which allowed visitors to follow the itinerary with each city popping up in sequence – undoubtedly augmented the maps’ appeal, but its popularity probably also was aided by a display of the prefatory maps in clear perspex hung from the ceiling. This allowed each visitor to walk around the maps themselves and see the entire series, including their famous open flaps. This presentation offered a contrast to many of the other manuscript displays: since most of the exhibition concentrated on bound books, most of the manuscripts could only be opened to one view.

In the middle of one of the Royal 14 C.VII maps (f. 4r) (fig. 1), a crane perched on a building that stands for the town of Sutri appears at the page’s centre. While viewing the maps, many visitors to the exhibit probably concluded that the crane was just a naturalistic detail. Actually,

Fig. 1. The crane. London, British Library, Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 4r.

however, the prefatory material in Royal 14 C. VII acts as a visual medieval preface in which the agendas of the book producer(s) are mapped out. In this case, the bird is not just a bird: the crane acts as visual emblem, rather like an element from a modern map legend, that refers to a vast amount of information and helps lay out the volume’s aim. Here, that aim is to map history through the lens of apocalyptic and crusader space and time.

In essence, the crane standing in the middle of f. 4r acts much like a digital, hyperlinked icon for its imagined audiences – the monks of St Albans and the royal circle of either Henry III or Edward I.

This small image is part of a system of visual exegesis in which the crane distills a vast amount of data connecting the historiographic material in Royal 14 C. VII with the two related manuscripts of the Chronica Majora. In so doing, the crane challenges our thinking about what both drawn marginalia and images of nature actually accomplish in medieval manuscript production.

Matthew Paris: scribe and illuminator

Matthew Paris entered the monastery of St Albans in Hertfordshire on St Agnes’s Day, 21 January 1217. He was dedicated to St Albans until his death in 1259. During his life, he became one of the monastery’s chief historians and produced Latin universal chronicles, abbey and genealogical histories, Anglo-Norman verse hagiography, the Liber Additamentorum, and fortune-telling tracts. In the world of thirteenth-century book production, he was an incredibly unusual figure – a compiler, a composer of new texts, and a scribe, as well as an artistic director and illuminator. In this way, he is a better fit for the nineteenth-century Romantic ideal of artistic genius than for the common realities of thirteenth-century book production. Whether in the monastery or in London and the university towns, book production during Matthew Paris’s lifetime was generally a communal affair in which the vellum maker, illuminator, scribe, patron, and writer each had a hand in producing both the physical object and the shape and agendas of the text it contained.

Chronica Majora and Royal MS. 14 C. VII

Matthew Paris’s body of written and visual work has survived in eighteen autograph manuscripts. Three of these autograph manuscripts contain volumes of the Chronica Majora. The first two volumes of the Chronica Majora – a universal world history – are in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 26, which covers the period from the Creation to 1188 (ff. 1r-140r) and MS. 16, which covers the period from 1189 to 1253 (ff. 1v-282r). The third volume of the Chronica Majora, accounting for the period between 1254 and 1259 (breaking off at Matthew Paris’s death), is in Royal 14 C. VII. This last manuscript also contains the only complete copy of Matthew Paris’s Historia Anglorum, itself a condensed and edited version of those portions of the Chronica Majora’s first two sections that deal with Britain (ff. 10r-156v); the last part of a three-volume Chronica Majora (ff. 157-218v); and a continuation

2 The audiences of Matthew Paris’s historiographic work, and particularly their potential noble and royal audiences, have been discussed in detail by Daniel Connolly, The Maps of Matthew Paris (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY, 2009).


5 Hereafter, all Cambridge Corpus Christi College manuscripts will be referred to as CCCC.
of the *Chronica Majora* probably written by William Rishanger which covers the years from 1259 to 1272 (ff. 219r–231r).6

All three manuscripts contain versions of the same prefatory materials: a genealogical history of the English kings, a diagram of the winds, maps of Britain, a pilgrimage itinerary to the Holy Land, an Easter chart, and calendar pages.7 In a way, these prefatory sections resemble deconstructed medieval *mappa mundi* that have been stretched out onto numerous vellum leaves.8 In fact, the maps’ *mise-en-page* is reminiscent of the *Chronica’s* and *Historia*’s textual two-column layout.

Of the three manuscripts, Royal 14 C.VII is considered the most luxurious and the most finished, especially with regard to its prefatory visual programme. The addition of expensive gold leaf makes it a prestige volume, its maps and geographic itineraries are complete, and both the *mise-en-page* and the visual commentary on Matthew Paris's *Historia* and *Chronica* are more precise and formal than in the other manuscripts.9

These prefatory sections are bound with these three *Chronica Majora* manuscripts, but they are on separate quires from the main chronicle texts and do not necessarily have the same date of production.10 Indeed, while dating the main text of the *Chronica Majora* is fairly straightforward, it is considerably more difficult to pinpoint the production of the prefatory materials.11 The first two volumes of the *Chronica Majora* (CCCC 26 and 16) were produced within a chronological order between c. 1236 into the beginning of the 1250s, when Matthew Paris was taking over the role of St Albans’s historian from his predecessor, Roger Wendover. The third volume of the *Chronica Majora* was produced in the 1250s until Matthew Paris’s death in 1259. William Rishanger continued this history – literally picking up where Matthew Paris left off – until the year 1272.12 However, the prefatory sections – particularly the itinerary and map – have been given differing dates of production.

P. D. A. Harvey considers both the Acre Map and the map of Britain in the third volume of the *Chronica Majora* (Royal 14 C. VII) to be the earliest amongst the three cartographic prefaces and dates them to 1252 at the earliest, basing this judgment on geographical cues.13 However,

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7 Though all have variations of the same material, only CCCC MS. 16 contains an image of Henry III’s elephant in the Tower with these prefatory materials.


11 Connolly points out how the rubrics for dating have relied on Vaughan’s analysis of handwriting. He has analysed the handwriting, artistic style, and other informational details to put the date of the prefatory section (particularly the itinerary) later. See *The Maps of Matthew Paris*, pp. 175-8.


Daniel Connolly has argued that the Royal preface was compiled last, and possibly as late as the 1290s as part of Edward I’s call to gather documents that would bolster his claim to Scotland. He puts the order of production of these itinerary maps as follows:

3. *Chronica Majora* (vol. 1, CCCC, MS. 26, ff. 1r-4r, covering Creation-1188) – most complete version with full flaps

Connolly bases his order and his hypothetically late thirteenth-century date on paleographic evidence in the itineraries, differences in artistic style, and a note on the fly-leaves of the Royal manuscript that makes reference to Scotland.

I agree with Connolly about the role of the Royal itinerary. In a similar fashion to how the *Historia Anglorum* text is an edited and condensed version of the first two volumes of the *Chronica Majora* in CCCC, MSS. 26 and 16, I believe this itinerary acts as a visual distillation of the vast system of emblems in the margins of the other *Chronica Majora* manuscripts. Furthermore, although Connolly argues convincingly that the Royal itinerary was produced after Matthew Paris’s death as part of a specific royal call for documents, I do not think that Matthew Paris’s virtual presence can be discounted, even if he was not directly involved in the construction of this prefatory material. He is present in the lingering effects of his collaborations with and training of those constructing it; he is present in their invocation of his visual *auctoritas* in portraits at the volume’s beginning and end. From this presence, the bookmakers of St Albans created a ‘Corporate Matthew Paris’ in which they participated and from which they drew for both inspiration and worldly currency.

The historiographic material in Royal 14 C. VII had a number of St Albans hands involved in its production, including Matthew Paris and William Rishanger. It is, however, Matthew Paris’s name and image that surfaces in small and large ways throughout the manuscript. He appears, even in the prefatory section, kneeling at the feet of a full-size Madonna and Child, clearly labelled ‘Matthew Paris’ on f. 6r (fig. 2). We know that William Rishanger continued the chronicle, and added drawings – including the last portrait commemorating Matthew Paris’s death on f. 218v (fig. 3). Both the text and the prefatory section experienced revisions, additions, and reassemblies through their thirteenth-century histories.

Though I believe that Connolly’s arguments are compelling, erasing Matthew Paris’s presence simply because he was probably dead when the Royal manuscript’s preface was assembled and finally packaged (and possibly created) is a mistake. The preface may or may not contain Matthew Paris’s own hand, but the manuscript’s producers, who may have tailored it for royal eyes later in the thirteenth century, deliberately fashioned the opening as a Matthew Paris production. The book claims Matthew Paris’s visual *auctoritas* – through

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16 Ibid, pp. 176-8. Connolly’s discussion of the Royal map is based on Vaughan’s analysis of handwriting and attribution of manuscripts to Matthew Paris. Connolly points out paleographical differences in the Royal itinerary that includes a rounder, more expansive, more legible, and straighter script. He writes: ‘Capital letters are also written differently in the Royal version than in any of the other, previous three versions […] Capitals ‘L’ and ‘R’, and more distinctively, ‘C’ and ‘S’ clearly evince different scribes at work, as do the different spellings of cities’ (p. 176). He cites the difference between ‘Dovera’ in CCCC 16 vs. ‘Dove’ in the Royal itinerary or ‘Pois’ in CCCC 16 versus ‘Poiz’ in Royal. In addition, he comments on a note on f. 1 on a fly leaf in a late thirteenth-century hand: ‘de homaggio Regionum Scotorum fo 3/fo 6 (concerning the homage [due] from the regions of the Scots, folios 3 through 6)’ (p. 178). He postulates that the Royal itinerary occupied these folios and may have been removed separately to be sent to the king, citing evidence in the left edge of the final folio. He concludes that the Royal itinerary may have been specifically produced for Edward’s call for materials regarding Scotland or at least embellished at this time and a map of England added at the time (p. 178).
Fig. 2. Matthew Paris in front of Madonna and Child. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 6r.
Matthew Paris, Visual Exegesis, and Apocalyptic Birds in Royal MS. 14 C. VII

Fig. 3. Matthew Paris’s death. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 218v.
Matthew Paris, Visual Exegesis, and Apocalyptic Birds in Royal MS. 14 C. VII

both the opening portrait at the foot of the Virgin and the closing portrait in his deathbed – as the most distinct marker of the St Albans monastery.\footnote{Ibid., 14. Connolly comments on Matthew’s death portrait as a way in which the pictorial record shows ‘that he is gone from this life, yet still an active agent in it’ (p. 14). But he does not comment in the same way on the opening portrait.}

These images reveal that Matthew Paris’s artistic and authorial stamp was imagined as necessary in presenting this book or its preface to a royal patron. His virtual presence at the codex’s beginning and the end are essential bookends (literally) to the fashioning of St Albans’s identity and its relationship to the kings of England. Matthew Paris has been deliberately shaped as the main agent behind the production of this book – whether this be representative of actual involvement or of St Albans’s corporate imprimatur, a form of what might now be called ‘branding’. With this in mind, I will continue to refer to Matthew Paris – both the real Matthew Paris and the corporate one – as the fashioning agent behind this volume.

The visual field

As Suzanne Lewis has noted, Matthew Paris’s first two *Chronica Majora* manuscripts (CCCC, MS. 26 and MS. 16) constitute ‘the first known medieval example of a historical text to have been provided with an extensive body of illustrations’.\footnote{Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 19.} Because he was author, scribe, and illustrator, Matthew Paris’s drawings become both an index of emblematic images (crowns, heraldic coats of arms, etc.) and also a ‘personal and highly inventive pictorial commentary’ on the historical text.\footnote{Ibid.} Likewise, the visual field in Royal 14 C. VII demonstrates how iconography can help shape the relationship between England and the world, the image of English royal kingship, and a vision of both religious and royal history.

Lewis discusses how Matthew Paris’s visual work in the three historical manuscripts (CCCC, MS. 26, CCCC, MS. 16, and Royal 14 C. VII) constitutes a system of *signa* – a visual indexing guide based on Ralph of Diceto’s historical work\footnote{Ralph of Diceto was a 12th-century English historian. See Melissa Pollock. ‘Ralph of Diceto’, *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*. Brill Online, 2012. Reference. VASSAR COLLEGE. 08 June 2012 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-the-medieval-chronicle/ralph-of-diceto-SIM_02139>} – that allows readers to find specific historical sections.\footnote{Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 43-5.} The monastery of St Albans owned a copy of Diceto in which Matthew Paris himself wrote notes – BL, Royal MS. 13. E. VI.\footnote{Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), p. 364. See. Vaughan, ‘The Handwriting of Matthew Paris’, pp. 381, 391.} In this way, the pictorial marginalia act as a reading device and finding aid.\footnote{Ibid., p. 43.} She likens the effect of his visual programme to that of ‘cinematic montage’ in which ‘startling juxtaposition and jarring contrast’ are the central modes used to create an effect of ‘unconnected multiplicity’.\footnote{Ibid, p. 51.} The marginal images also acted as an object of memory: a ‘reservoir of images’ in which the past can reside.\footnote{Ibid, p. 45. She cites Michael Clanchy: ‘To the modern eye an early medieval archive would have looked more like a magpie’s nest than a filing system for documents. Yet, however bizarre such objects might look at first sight, the sacristan could no doubt have explained the significance as a memento of each individual object’. See Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993), p. 127.} Many of these marginal images also serve as visual emblems to written texts. In essence, the image focalizes on ‘a single salient aspect of the narrative for the illustration of the whole text, so that these reduced images may be perceived to function as symbols *pars pro toto*’.\footnote{Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 66.} Thus, some of these marginal images would become ‘a kind of pictorial synecdoche’ that condenses whole historical sections into one visual part or object.

\footnote{17 Ibid., 14. Connolly comments on Matthew’s death portrait as a way in which the pictorial record shows ‘that he is gone from this life, yet still an active agent in it’ (p. 14). But he does not comment in the same way on the opening portrait.}
\footnote{18 Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 19.}
\footnote{19 Ibid.}
\footnote{21 Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 43-5.}
\footnote{23 Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 43.}
\footnote{24 Ibid., p. 51.}
\footnote{25 Ibid, p. 45. She cites Michael Clanchy: ‘To the modern eye an early medieval archive would have looked more like a magpie’s nest than a filing system for documents. Yet, however bizarre such objects might look at first sight, the sacristan could no doubt have explained the significance as a memento of each individual object’. See Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993), p. 127.}
\footnote{26 Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 66.}
Lewis speaks specifically in relation to the written chronicle sections of these manuscripts, but the same dynamic operates in the prefatory materials — and this is particularly true of Royal 14 C. VII. Because this preface appears to be a revised version of those in CCCC, MS. 26 and CCCC, MS. 16, it also condenses its visual signs, specifically deploying them in a system of sigla that comments on the connections between England and the crusader East. One way it accomplishes this aim is through the apocalyptic birds painted in the manuscript — starting with the crane on f. 4r.

Mapping history, mapping the Apocalypse

The maps, genealogies, and histories in the Royal and Corpus manuscripts bring together geography, time, and theology to produce an eschatological understanding of historiography. In order to accomplish this confluence, Matthew Paris used the work of Joachim of Fiore on the correct calculation of Easter and, thus, of the Apocalypse. He also used the historical writings of Hugh of St Victor to shape his historiographic work — especially that theologian’s ideas about a kind of map reading that traverses geographical, historical, and spiritual modes. Joachim of Fiore was known in the thirteenth century for three things: ‘his gift of spiritual intelligence, his special method of Biblical exegesis through a pattern of history, and his prophecy of approaching crisis.’ We know that Matthew Paris was keenly interested in Joachim’s apocalyptic prophecy, since he paraphrased Joachim’s work on the approximate time of the world’s end and the Antichrist’s arrival at the lower margins of the Chronica Majora (CCCC, MS. 26, f. 15v). He also wrote a set of verses noting the approximate time from the Nativity of the Antichrist’s arrival: ‘Cum fuerint anni transacti mille ducenti/ Et quinquaginta post partum Virginis almac/ Tunc antichristus nascetur demone plenus’ (When twice six hundred years and fifty more/ Are gone since blessed Mary’s son was born,/ Then, Antichrist shall come full of the devil.). Matthew Paris, like several other English writers, believed that the Antichrist’s arrival was at hand and that the Tartar invasion of Europe in 1238 was a sign of his coming. In fact, in his Additamenta to the Chronica Majora (BL, Cotton MS. Nero D. I), he specifically refers to the Tartar invasion and the coming of the Antichrist.

The date of the end of the world had been set by various manuscripts of the period to 1260, and Matthew Paris seems to have been aware of this. Joachim of Fiore died in 1202, but his work circulated rapidly beyond Calabria and Italy into France (vis-à-vis Robert of Auxerre). The English circulation of his work is evident in several early thirteenth-century chronicles. Scholars have pointed out that his first non-Italian audience was Anglo-Norman chroniclers who gave accounts of Joachim’s meeting with Richard I on the third crusade. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, Sicily was a Norman kingdom with ties to the kings of England and France. The influence of Sicily on its environs would have made a Norman audience a natural local connection.

31 CCCC 26, f. 15v. See Connolly, The Maps of Matthew Paris, p. 17. This verse is placed in the margins to comment on Roger of Wendover’s description of the Nativity. See also Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris, pp. 103-4.
35 Marjorie Reeves, The Influence of Prophecy, p. 39.
in distinguishing a non-Italian audience seems a rather modern one – related to an idea of Calabria and Sicily as part of Italy.\footnote{Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, \textit{Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England} (Notre Dame, 2006), p. 72.}

Both Roger of Hoveden’s (d. 1201/2) \textit{Gesta Henrici II Benedicti abbatis} (BL, Cotton MS. Julius A. XI, ff. 3-112) and his \textit{Chronica} contain narrative accounts of Joachim of Fiore’s meeting with Richard I in Messina in 1190.\footnote{David Corner, ‘Howden (Hoveden), Roger of’, \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography}, accessed 12 June 2012, \url{http://www.oxforddnb.com}. The ‘Gesta Henrici II Benedicti Abbatis’ is the original heading in the manuscript.} The \textit{Gesta} was originally attributed to Benedict of Peterborough (c. 1135-1193); but the earliest manuscript, BL, Cotton MS. Julius A. XI, in fact, was part of Benedict of Peterborough’s library, rather than a text that he composed.\footnote{Edmund King, ‘Benedict (of Peterborough)’, \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography}, accessed 12 June 2012, \url{http://www.oxforddnb.com}.} The historiographic accounts recognize him as a ‘spiritum habens propheticum’ and he is noted for his apocalyptic interpretation.\footnote{Bloomfield and Reeves, ‘The Penetration of Joachism’, p. 776.}


The references to Joachim of Fiore in several thirteenth-century chronicles including Roger Hoveden’s \textit{Gesta} and \textit{Cronica}; Ralph of Coggeshall’s \textit{Chronicon Anglicanum}; Roger of Wendover’s \textit{Flores Historiarum},\footnote{Roger of Wendover, \textit{Flores Historiarum}, ed. Henry G. Hewlett, 3 vols, Rolls Series, lxxiv (London, 1886-89), vol. i, pp. 121-3.} and Matthew Paris’s \textit{Chronica Majora} speak to the circulation of his work in England before 1260. The English manuscripts containing Joachim of Fiore’s work appear to have surfaced immediately after his death in the form of little booklets. The English manuscript evidence persistently imagines the end of the world in two ways: by linking the heretic hordes as a sign of the Apocalypse and also by focusing on Joachim
of Fiore’s controversial views on the Trinity.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, we have a flurry of different types of manuscript evidence beyond English chronicles that attest to an interest and circulation of Joachite material in England pre-1260.

There has been some critical discussion of whether Joachite material was available in England before 1260. R. Freyhan has argued that none existed in a direct reply to Francis Klingender’s work.\textsuperscript{47} However, more recent work on Joachim has highlighted the abundance of material documentary evidence for his circulation pre-1260. These include an anti-Joachite Latin poem from the first half of the thirteenth century in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 40, ff. 43r–43v. Joachim of Fiore is mentioned several times in a few manuscripts connected to the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds: BL, Royal MS. 8 C. IV and Royal MS. 10 B. XII. Several thirteenth-century Bibles also include references to Joachim at the end of the volume, occasionally on the fly leaves – BL, Harley MS. 1280, f. 427 and Cambridge, St John’s College, MS. 239 (N.I).\textsuperscript{48}

Likewise, we know that several religious and philosophical figures in thirteenth-century England, often Franciscan, were reading Joachite material. Along with Matthew Paris’s and Roger of Wendover’s (Matthew Paris’s predecessor) interest at St Albans, we know that Adam Marsh – the Franciscan scholar and spiritual director to Simon de Montfort and his wife – wrote and sent to Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, a ‘libellus’ of Joachim of Fiore.\textsuperscript{49} In addition, Roger Bacon’s \textit{Opus Majus} refers to Joachim of Fiore’s worry that the Tartar invasions had been a sign of the Antichrist’s coming.\textsuperscript{50}

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton’s work on the suppression of Joachim of Fiore in England sketches a history of his circulation before his condemnation in 1254. And in particular, she describes how the controversy of Gerard of Borgo San Donnino’s \textit{Liber Introductorius} to Joachim’s works created a mutinous movement to overthrow the church in Rome called the ‘Scandal of the ‘Eternal Gospel’.\textsuperscript{51} She indicates that Matthew Paris was the earliest chronicler to document this scandal.\textsuperscript{52} The Franciscans, as seen in the interest of both Roger Bacon and Adam Marsh, utilized the work of Joachim of Fiore to identify both mendicant orders in England – the Franciscans and the Dominicans – as the ‘viri spirituales’ Joachim foretold would come and help defeat the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{53} The Franciscans believed they were the men chosen for this task especially because of their vow of poverty – a sign that Joachim of Fiore prophesized would mark these \textit{viri spirituales}. Likewise, they believed that St Francis was ‘the Angel of the Sixth Seal of Apocalypse 7.2’, whose advent marked the beginning of the critical period of history immediately preceding the coming of the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, the Franciscans very much had Joachite apocalypticism in the forefront of their movement.

\textsuperscript{46} Marjorie Reeves, \textit{The Influence of Prophecy}, pp. 42 and 45. See also Bloomfield and Reeves, ‘The Penetration of Joachism’, p. 783. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 condemned Joachim’s Trinitarian views and from this point forward he had the reputation of being both heretic and prophet.


\textsuperscript{50} Reeves, \textit{The Influence of Prophecy}, p. 46. The \textit{Opus Majus} of Roger Bacon, tr. R. B. Burke (Philadelphia, 1928), vol. i, p. 290.


\textsuperscript{52} Kerby-Fulton, \textit{Books Under Suspicion}, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{53} Bernard McGinn, \textit{Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Also of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola} (New York, 1979), p. 151.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. The ‘Apocalypse’ referred to here is the Biblical Book of Revelation.
However, several radical factions in the order took it so far as to prophesy the destruction of the current church by 1260 and its replacement with ‘a new Joachite world order’. This radical strain of mutiny against the church in Rome became known as the ‘Scandal of the Eternal Gospel’ (1254-55). The consequences include the life imprisonment of one Franciscan radical and the removal of the Franciscan leader, John of Parma, from his role as Minister General of the Franciscan order. His successor, Bonaventure, a Parisian theologian, also used apocalyptic strains in his historical philosophy – but in more subdued ways. Therefore, Joachite ideas of apocalyptic history and the connections between St Francis and the Franciscan order to Joachim of Fiore’s apocalyptic works were firmly established within both English and continental religious milieus.

The prefatory material to the Historia Anglorum

With this background in mind, I would like to now turn to Royal MS. 14 C. VII and its prefatory section. For the thirteenth-century royal readers of this manuscript, the book would open with the diagram of the winds in which Oriens (the East) would be placed at the top and Occidens (the West) would be at the bottom (fig. 4). Versions of this diagram are present in the other two Chronica Majora codices. The diagram refers to the thirteenth-century medieval mappa mundi that imagined the world in geographic and theological terms. We can compare this to a slightly later image (c. 1262) in BL, Additional MS. 28681, also known as the Psalter Map (fig. 6). In this image, the winds encircle a world with a circular Jerusalem at the centre. Oriens is marked with Adam and Eve and the forbidden tree of knowledge. Christ sits above the world with his angels and the dragons of hell, and the Apocalypse are below. Matthew Paris’s maps perform a similar function to a regular mappa mundi, but deconstructed into various diagrams, charts, maps, and images. The very act of deconstruction has also reshaped hierarchies, boundaries, and connections.

This Psalter Map makes evident the theological underpinnings of mappa mundi, in which religious and historical time are brought together to map out the end of days. Likewise, Royal 14 C.VII’s final image of the Holy Land places the emphasis not on Jerusalem, but on Acre (fig. 7). The map has made the kingdom of Jerusalem a four-square, walled city, which directly corresponds to the image of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation. Matthew Paris describes Jerusalem in this manner in the Chronica Majora probably based on a description in the Rothelin continuation of William of Tyre’s Histoire d’Outremer (fig. 8).

But this four-square city’s shape is in contrast to Jerusalem’s standard image as a round city, as seen in the Psalter Map. Consequently, the twin goals of apocalypse (New Jerusalem) and crusade (Acre) are mapped facing each other in the codex. However, while Acre takes centre stage by its very size, Jerusalem’s shape in this map allows the holy city to inhabit two cartographic zones: an apocalyptic geography of the heavenly Jerusalem and a contemporary crusader geography of the actual Jerusalem. Thus, by deconstructing a mappa mundi into disparate parts, Matthew

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55 McGinn, Apocalyptic Spirituality, p. 152.
56 McGinn, ibid.
57 Because the maps have been taken out of the manuscript, the order of images at the beginning are different from what thirteenth-century readers would have seen.
59 See Connolly, The Maps of Matthew Paris, p. 27. See also Suzanne Lewis, Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse (Cambridge, 1995), p. 222. She points to an example: ‘Among the Episcopal spokesman, Roger Niger attributed the collapse of the Second Crusade to divine judgment on men’s transgressions and advised those who planned the Third Crusade to make a spiritual pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem as well as an armed pilgrimage to the earthly city’ (p. 222).
Fig. 4. Diagram of Winds. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 1v.
Fig. 5. Image of Winds. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16, f. iv. With permission.
Fig. 6. Psalter Map *mappa mundi*. London, British Library, Additional MS. 28681, f. 9r.
Fig. 7. Acre. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 4v.
Fig. 8. Jerusalem. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 5r.
Matthew Paris, Visual Exegesis, and Apocalyptic Birds in Royal MS. 14 C. VII

Paris reorients cartographic hierarchies and entwines the contemporary crusader present with the apocalyptic future. The next several folios contain the itinerary to Jerusalem in which we see a visually streamlined presentation of Western geography and history starting with London and the story of its foundation by Brutus, then travelling through France and into Italy. In the itinerary’s first several folios, the neatly lined architectural images dominate across England and France (fig. 9). In Italy, however, the map starts to lose its geometric shape and begins to become more chaotic (fig. 10). And as we hurtle towards the Mediterranean, the itinerary becomes more disordered and other visual signs begin to surface beneath the architectural order seen in the early pages. Not coincidentally, this is where visual markers of the East appear, particularly in the form of flora and fauna native to Asia and the Middle East (fig. 11). This visual disorder ties into Joachite ideas regarding the Tartars as signs of the Antichrist.

In the previous Corpus maps (CCCC, MS. 26 and CCCC, MS. 16), the entire Jerusalem itinerary – though most noticeable in the first leg from London to France – had been much less regimented and orderly (fig. 12). The Royal manuscript has edited out much from the other *Chronica Majora* itineraries, and in doing so, has concentrated and deployed its visual iconography in more deliberate ways. In addition to the more immediately apparent visual disruption of switching from the orderly, two-column layout of the Corpus maps to a multi-flapped, two-and-a-half column layout, Royal 14 C. VII’s cartographic progression into Italy is also marked by changes in content. One of these changes is the unobtrusive appearance of a bird that is perched on the city of Sutri, just outside of Rome.

**Visual exegesis as visual commentary**

This crane is the first example of visual exegesis that I wish to discuss in this article. I use the term ‘visual exegesis’ to think through Paolo Berdini’s work on theories of visual reading. In essence, he argues that ‘fundamentally painting visualizes a reading and not a text’. Thus for the readers and viewers of visual material, the image becomes ‘the painter’s reading of the text’. The picture becomes a way for the painter (or illuminator) to set up how s/he wishes the reader/viewer to experience the text. Berdini calls this ‘the trajectory of visualization’.

Berdini’s argument points out that painting is not a 1:1 correspondence with written narrative, but rather presents ‘the beholder with an experience, that like reading for the reader, exceeds the narratival aspect of the text’.

In essence, Matthew Paris – especially in his images from the prefatory sections of Royal 14 C. VII – has created a dense and complex moment of visual exegesis. Because the prefatory section of a manuscript often outlines the agendas of the narrative material that follows, the stakes of visual exegesis in this portion of the book are particularly high. The potential readers/viewers of this volume have been identified as the monks of St Albans and potentially either Henry III and/or Edward I and their royal circles. What the single image of the crane accomplishes is to open up a larger field of exegetical interpretation that crosses into the areas of prophecy, universal and ecclesiastical history, and potential warnings and advice to the King of England.

Matthew Paris has utilized this condensed pictorial sign system in Royal 14 C. VII’s visual preface. First, Diceto’s system of signs is used as reading guides to blocks of material; second, its use in the preface transforms this visual section, and particularly the map, into a legend that refers to other marginal visual material – in this case, in his *Chronica*. Finally, this new use of Diceto’s systems allows this visual preface to gesture towards larger bodies of visual

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61 Ibid, p. 171.
Fig. 9. Itinerary through England and France. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 2r.
Fig. 10. Italy. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 3v.
Fig. 11. Italy with flap. Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 4r.
Fig. 12. Corpus itinerary London to France. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 26, f. ir. With permission.
meaning. In essence, this single image signifies a vast field of visual information. By revising the maps, paring down the images, the presence of the crane stands out. The crane itself does double work by simultaneously speaking to both monastic and royal audiences.

This crane is understood in a different context in the *Chronica Majora*, where it appears on f. iv in a less condensed map (fig. 13). Here, two similar birds are perched on towers in the town of Turin and Susa. They are, like, the single crane in the Royal 14 C.VII map, present only in Italy. They are visual replicas of the bird in Royal 14 C. VII and also of another set of images in CCCC, MS. 16. These birds are linked by their similarity; however because the crane in Royal 14 C. VII is the last one drawn, it has been deployed more strategically in the last version of the Jerusalem itinerary. But more importantly, the function of this crane in the middle of a map in Royal 14 C. VII is to signal the apocalyptic agenda of the manuscript to the viewing and reading audience.

The birds of the Apocalypse

As Francis Klingender has noted, a marginal image from the *Chronica Majora* clearly features St Francis preaching to a set of birds (fig. 14). In the notes surrounding the margin, Matthew Paris writes: ‘Avete aves, laudate Creatorem vestrum, qui vos pascit et ordinatis plumis vestit, nec laboratis, netis, aratis, vel seminatis, nec in horrea congregatis’ (Hail birds, praise your Creator, who feeds you and clothes you with feathers, although you toil not, neither do you spin, plough, sow or gather into barns). Beneath the image he further comments: ‘Dum iter ageret per vallem Spoletanam, hoc evenit, nec tantum de columbis, cornicibus, vel monedulis, sed vulturibus et volucribus rapacibus’ (This happened while he was walking in the valley of Spoleto, and not only with doves, crows or daws, but with vultures and birds of prey).

One of the large birds of prey depicted in this scene is the crane – the same crane we see perched at Sutri, a suburb of Rome, in the Royal itinerary. This is one of the earliest English images of this scene from St Francis of Assisi’s life, and it clearly was influential. Throughout the thirteenth century, English iconography always showed St Francis preaching to sinister and predatory birds.

This recasting of predatory birds fits into Matthew Paris’s interest in history and geography with an apocalyptic focus. Klingender has traced the connections of Matthew Paris to the Franciscan order and has shown how Roger Wendover, the St Albans historian who preceded Paris, conflated St Francis’s sermon with the verses of the Book of Revelation 18:2 and 19:17-18.

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62 The three birds in the map sections of CCCC, MS. 26 and Royal 14 C. VII have been called both cranes and storks. Lewis has described the birds perched in CCCC, MS. 26 as storks; likewise, the recent catalogue description in the *Royal Manuscripts* exhibition identifies the bird in Royal 14 C. VII as a stork. But the bird in Royal 14 C.VII visually is a match to a marginal image drawn by Matthew Paris in CCCC, MS. 16 that is a visual marker of St Francis’s sermon to the birds. Rosalind Brooke has called the bird in the St Francis scene a crane though other critics have called this bird a stork. My point is that either identification works because all these birds look more or less alike. See Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 340; McKendrick et al., *Royal Manuscripts*, p. 295. See also Rosalind B. Brooke, *The Image of St Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 196; Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 316, for the identification of the crane. See also Edward Armstrong, *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973), p. 245. He identifies this bird as a stork.

63 *Chronica Majora*, vol. iii. p. 133.
64 Klingender, ‘St Francis and the Birds of the Apocalypse’, p. 15.
65 *Chronica Majora*, vol. iii. p. 133.
66 Klingender, ‘St Francis and the Birds of the Apocalypse’, p. 15.
67 Ibid, p. 16.
Fig. 13. Cranes/storks in Torine and Suse. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 26, f. iiiv. With permission.
Fig. 14. St Francis preaching to the birds. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 16 II, f. 70v. With permission.
The Book of Revelation 18:2

et exclamavit in forti voce dicens cecidit cecidit Babylon magna et facta est habitatio daemoniorum et custodia omnis spiritus inmundi et custodia omnis volucris immundae.  

(And he cried out with a strong voice, saying: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen; and is become the habitation of devils and the hold of every unclean spirit, and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird.)

The Book of Revelation 19:17–18

(17) et vidi unum angelum stantem in sole et clamavit voce magna dicens omnibus avibus quae volabant per medium caeli venite congregamini ad cenam magnum Dei (18) ut manducetis carnes regum et carnes tribunorum et carnes fortium et carnes equorum et sedentium in ipsis et carnes omnium liberorum ac servorum ac pusillorum ac magnorum  

((17) And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that did fly through the midst of heaven: Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of God: (18) That you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of tribunes, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all freemen and bondmen, and of little and of great.)

These two verses, then, explain the crane’s meaning in Matthew Paris’s work, where it has become mixed in with the story of St Francis preaching to the birds. In addition, Wendover has moved the location of the legend of St Francis preaching to the birds from the valley of Spoleto to just outside of Rome. This remapping allows the Chronica to align Rome to the apocalyptic Babylon.

Several thirteenth-century English apocalypses, including many from St Albans, use predatory and carrion-eating birds in their depictions of these passages from Revelation. For instance, images in the Morgan Apocalypse (Pierpont Morgan Library) and the Dyson Perrins Apocalypse (Getty Museum) show several of these birds, including owls and crows (figs 15 and 16). These examples reveal an iconographic tradition in which predatory birds are present in the Christian apocalyptic tradition and in St Francis’s revised sermon to the birds.

Thus, the crane on top of Sutri evokes apocalyptic connections that imply that the East begins just outside of Rome. This geographic shift would have carried significant repercussions for both potential audiences of this manuscript – both the St Albans monastic community and the English kings of the last half of the thirteenth century. For the monks of St Albans, the shift would reconfirm their recorded frustration (and Matthew Paris’s own disgust as seen in his Chronica) with the papal leadership. In particular, Matthew Paris was vocal in the Chronica about the papacy’s taxation and greed and their lack of leadership in regaining more ground in the Holy Land. The fact that the apocalyptic East began at the doorstep of the Roman papacy would have only confirmed to the monks their collective misgivings about the papacy. Likewise, the crane, as a revisionary piece and painted after the ‘Scandal of the Eternal Gospel’ in 1254-1255, would have actually become an embedded symbol that could gesture obliquely to a continued belief in Joachite apocalypticism. To royal readers, on the other hand, this relocation would have sent a message that Rome should be dealt with carefully, suggesting that full alignment with the papal agenda could potentially put the King of England in the Antichrist’s camp.

In this fashion, the crane becomes a visual repository with multiple potential meanings. As a sign of nature, it is not at the map’s edge in Royal 14 C. VII, but rather at the centre.

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69 The Holy Bible, p. 293.
71 The Holy Bible, p. 294.
72 Suzanne Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris, pp. 244-5.
And in this location, it controls the discourse being visualized in the prefatory section of this manuscript. Michael Gaudio has recently discussed the animals and natural images in Matthew Paris’s maps as a way in which the maps find authority. Drawing on Michael Camille’s work on natural images on the margins of manuscripts and how they construct authority, Gaudio argues that ‘the dialectic of center and margin offers a particularly appropriate model for interpreting Matthew’s cartography’. He believes that the marginal place of nature in Matthew’s maps is a way of marking order. However, because Gaudio does not take into account the revisions, changes, and differences in the three sets of maps attached to the Chronica Majora manuscripts – CCCC, MS. 26, CCCC, MS. 16, and Royal MS. 14 C. VII – he has not noticed that the crane in Royal 14 C.VII (as well in CCCC, MS. 26) is not on the margin, but rather in the middle of the manuscript page. Likewise, the maps in all three manuscripts are part of a package of prefatory items that have deconstructed the mappa mundi into composite parts and have constructed an alternative visual synecdoche. Thus, it is difficult to locate the centre vs. the margin because of its deconstructed nature; instead, the image of nature vis-à-vis the crane has become the place of signification – the site of visual exegesis. As an image of nature in a medieval map, the crane is not emptied of authority or an image of negative nature; rather, it is a productive site that refers to the past concomitantly directing the eyes of the readers to the future. This crane, then, is a robust two-dimensional image that redraws boundaries and folds time.

Black birds

The crane is not the only apocalyptic bird used robustly in Matthew Paris’s historiographic work. The use of black birds in the marginal commentary on the Historia Anglorum also points to an apocalyptic vision of history. On f. 127v, the illuminator has noted the death of the Sultan of Babylon (Cairo) with an image of him crowned and a black bird flying out of his mouth and down the page (fig. 17). By contrast, other kings are commemorated upon their death with an upside down coat of arms. The image of the black bird swooping down is related to the apocalyptic carrion-eating birds. Since the bird emerges from the mouth of the sultan, this bird also connects crusader history in the Eastern Mediterranean with religious apocalyptic history – in which the sultan has been marked as being on the Antichrist’s side. A similar image appears in the Chronica Majora’s visual commentary on Saladin’s death in CCCC, MS. 16. Here, an identical crowned man is shown with a black bird swooping down the page (fig. 18).

Though the use of apocalyptic symbols could indicate Matthew Paris’s interest in distinguishing the Christians from the infidels, he also had no qualms utilizing the apocalyptic bird for Christians. In the Historia Anglorum, he uses a reversal of the black bird imagery to mark the worthiness of a noble French crusader. On f. 148v, the death of William Castellan of St Omer during a crusader skirmish is represented by his upside down shield and the presence of a white dove flying towards the hands of God (fig. 19). On the other hand, in a portrait that parallels that of the Sultan of Babylon from the Historia Anglorum, the presence of another diving black bird indicates the illuminator’s belief that Robert, count of Artois, should not expect to go to heaven, but rather into apocalyptic hell. Robert, count of Artois’s disruptive and condemned behaviour and ignoble death that led to a Christian massacre at the hands of the Saracens is related in the Historia Anglorum alongside this image:

Mandatum flebile transmissum de Terra Sancta comiti Ricardo.

Die vero beati Kenelmi, videlicet kalendis Augusti, comite Ricardo existente Londoniis, et ad scaccarium sedente, venit ad ipsum nuncius quidam festinus et tristis, rumorum et

Matthew Paris, Visual Exegesis, and Apocalyptic Birds in Royal MS. 14 C. VII

Fig. 15. Apocalyptic birds. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS. M 524, f. 18v. With permission.
Fig. 17. Swooping black bird. London, British Library, Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 127v.
Fig. 18. Swooping black bird. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 16 II, f. 13v. With permission.
Fig. 19. Dove and black bird. London, Royal MS. 14 C. VII, f. 148v.
Matthew Paris, Visual Exegesis, and Apocalyptic Birds in Royal MS. 14 C. VII

literarum bajulus tetterimarum, hujus sententiae tenorem continentium: “Totus exercitus Christianus in Terra Sancta, constans ex exercitu (84) regis Francorum et quorumdam Anglorum, Templariorum, Hospitaliorum, Theutonicorum et fratrum Sancti Lazari, confusus, triumphantibus Crucis hostibus, devictus occubuit. Cujus ruinae causa comes Atrabatensis Robertus, infelix et superbus, fuisse perhibetur. Hujus autem infortunii plena enarratio in carta missa domino regi prolixius enarratur. Quod autem lugubrius erat, multi Christiani apostatatur et fides titubavit Christiana, et Damiatæ restituta est Sarracenis; et dominus rex Francorum, quod nunquam anteae evenerat, a Sarraecis captus est, et pro multis milibus marcarum redemptus; unde tota Francia, imo etiam tota Christianitas, induit dolorem et cum diffidentia confusionem.”

(The melancholy reports which were bought from the Holy Land)

Indeed, on the day of St Kenelm, which was on 1 August [1250], as Earl Richard was sitting in the Exchequer at London, there came to him in all haste a messenger, who was the sorrowful bearer of most melancholy reports, and of letters which contained the following substance:

“The whole Christian army in the Holy Land – consisting of the army of the king of France and of certain Englishmen, Templars, Hospitallers, Teutonic knights and brothers of [the Order of] Saint Lazarus – has been cast into confusion, with the enemies of the Cross triumphant, and has fallen defeated. It is understood that the cause of the ruin was Count Robert of Artois, an unlucky and proud man. The full narration of his misfortune is recounted at greater length in a letter despatched to the lord king. And what was more lamentable, many Christians have apostatized and the Christian faith has faltered, and Damietta has been restored to the Saracens; and the lord king of France, a thing that has never happened before, has been captured by the Saracens, and ransomed for many thousands of marks; whence the whole of France, yea the whole of Christendom, assumes a state of grief and confusion with despair.”

Matthew Paris’s visual emblems did not just stop at marking expected enemies of the East as potential allies to the Antichrist – he also used this flexible visual form of exegesis to place Christian individuals within the framework of his apocalyptic rhetoric. Robert’s disastrous military career that led to terrible Christian losses during the crusades made him a prime candidate for Matthew Paris’s visual excoriation.

Conclusion

The apocalyptic crane in Royal 14 C. VII is only one example of the possibilities available in mining the dense and robust visual field in this manuscript’s preface. Other visual images and patterns also do the heavy work of laying out this manuscript’s rhetorical, religious, and historiographic agendas. For instance, the radical revision of the gallery of kings from its earlier genealogical roll and diagram seen in the Corpus manuscripts of the Chronica Majora to a niched, sculptural gallery (with saturated colour) in Royal 14 C. VII’s prefatory gallery is another visual field that

74 Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Historia Anglorum, Sive, Ut Vulgo Dicitur, Historia Minor. Item, Eiusdem Abbrencatio Chronicorum Anglic, ed. Sir Frederic Madden, 3 vols, Rolls Series, xlv (London, 1866-69), vol. iii, pp. 83-4. The editor’s note on p. 84 points out that “Comitis Atrabatensis Robert”, by the side of which is drawn a black bird, as the symbol of Evil Spirit …


eBLJ 2014, Article 5
points to the Apocalypse. In this case, the niched, sculptural gallery has become an example of intermediality in which a two-dimensional painted image stands in for the sculptural front on the side of Wells Cathedral—all while each king in his alcove holds the symbol of a monastic building. Linking this gallery to Wells Cathedral also entwines the royal gallery of English kings to Wells’s visual sculpture face that depicts the apocalyptic Jerusalem.76

Likewise, the fabric pattern seen in Royal 14 C. VII’s preface on the Madonna and Child, on the kings in the royal gallery, and on the sails on several ships in the Mediterranean enfolds the crusader, royal, and religious agendas of this manuscript intimately with the monastery of St Albans. The fabric refers to the cloak so central to St Albans’s story of conversion and the foundation of the monastery in Matthew Paris’s Life of St Albans—Dublin, Trinity College, MS. 177 (E. I. 40).77

These further examples are only a taste of the visual signification working in the early leaves of Royal 14 C. VII. The visual preface, in which the mappa mundi is deconstructed and scattered into different parts, also has allowed Matthew Paris to disrupt cartographic binaries of centre and periphery. Instead, the reader—monastic or royal—is left with potential views of dynamic visual meaning in which animals take centre stage in religious exegetical systems and the tactility of fabric weaves the history of a monastic house with the history of English kings in England and in the Middle East.

76 See Carolyn Marino Malone, Façade as Spectacle: Ritual and Ideology at Wells Cathedral (Leiden, 2004).
77 See Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Thelma Fenster (tr. and intro.), The Life of Saint Alban by Matthew Paris (Tempe, AZ, 2010).