

Chronology and truth: Matthew Paris and the *Chronica Majora*

Matthew Paris's reputation as an historian stands or falls on his *Chronica Majora*.¹ This extraordinary work gives a hugely detailed account of contemporary events between 1234-35 and Paris's death in 1259. It is centered on England but has much too about Britain and the wider world.² Paris owed a great debt to his predecessor at St Albans, Roger of Wendover. Indeed, the *Chronica Majora*, until 1234-35, is essentially a copy, although with many additions and alterations, of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum*.³ Yet in terms of sheer weight of material, Paris's work dwarfs Wendover's and that of all the other historians working in the period. The *Flores Historiarum*, in the twenty-two years between 1212 and 1233 averages 18 pages a year in the printed Rolls Series edition. The *Chronica Majora* in the twenty-two years between 1236 and 1258, achieves a yearly average of 77.⁴ After the *Chronica Majora*, the monastic chronicle which covers this period in most detail is that of Dunstable priory. It does so in 68 printed pages, as opposed to the *Chronica Majora*'s 1,689.⁵ If one adds in the accompanying documents which Paris copied into a separate volume (his *Liber Additamentorum*), then the *Chronica Majora* between 1236 and 1258 is roughly the same length as all twelve of the chronicles, covering the *whole* of the thirteenth century, in the Rolls Series *Annales Monastici* edition. As V.H. Galbraith commented, 'medieval history on this scale is unique'.⁶

Galbraith pointed to the range of interests which lay behind the gigantic scale of Paris's work, and paid tribute to his 'humanity', which meant he was interested in the whole of human life, not just the doings of an elite.⁷ Richard Vaughan likewise wrote of Paris's 'interest in human beings and in the ordinary episodes of daily life', 'a rare and valuable quality', he thought, 'among medieval chroniclers'.⁸ Neither Vaughan nor Galbraith, however, had a very positive view of Paris as an historian. Vaughan believed him 'basically unreliable as a historical source'. Galbraith thought his additions to Wendover's

¹ I am grateful to Barbara Harvey, Margaret Howell, John Maddicott and Bjørn Weiler for commenting on a draft of this paper.

² For Paris's life, see chapter I of Vaughan's *Matthew Paris* (1958), re-issued with supplementary bibliography (1979) [hereafter Vaughan] and S. Lloyd and R. Reader, 'Matthew Paris', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21268>, accessed 3 Nov 2009. For Paris's wider concerns outside Britain, see the chapter by Bjørn Weiler in this volume. Although Paris also wrote a *Historia Anglorum* and a *Flores Historiarum*, these are, for the most part, simply abridgements of the *Chronica Majora*, as on an even shorter scale is his *Abbreviatio Chronicorum*.

³ The *Chronica Majora*, with the passages copied directly from Wendover in small type, is printed in *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora*, ed. H.R. Luard, 7 vols. (Rolls Series, 1872-83) [henceforth *CM*]. R. Kay, 'Wendover's last annal', *English Historical Review*, lxxxiv (1969), 779-785 argued that Paris took over from Wendover in the course of 1234 not 1235, as usually supposed, an hypothesis which seems to me to have some weight. In his *Matthew Paris*, Vaughan took the usual view that the changeover was in 1235 (pp.28-30), but in his later *Chronicles of Matthew Paris; Monastic Life in the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1986), at p.8 he stated that Paris might have started in 1234 or 1235. This was presumably on the strength of Kay's paper which is cited in the supplementary bibliography (p.276) to the re-issue of *Matthew Paris* in 1979.

⁴ *CM*, iii, 334-640 (1236-39); iv, i-655 (1240-47); v, 1-728 (1248-58). Wendover's work is printed in *The Flowers of History by Roger of Wendover*, ed. H.G. Hewlett, 3 vols (Rolls Ser., 1886-9). Wendover becomes original from about 1202 but was not writing until the 1220s. His longest year (50 pages) is 1215, partly because of writing out papal and royal documents including, of course, a version of Magna Carta. After a fallow period in the Minority, he then began to write more, averaging between 1226 and 1233 20.5 pages per year. One wonders if he had Paris's assistance in this period. The classic study of the relationship between Wendover and Paris is V.H. Galbraith, *Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris* (1944) [hereafter Galbraith].

⁵ *Annales Monastici*, ed. H.R. Luard, 5 vols. (Rolls Series, 1864-9) [henceforth *AM*], iii, 143-211.

⁶ *AM*; Galbraith, 42, 24.

⁷ Galbraith, 38.

⁸ Vaughan, 129. For Paris's range see also A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), chapter 16 'Matthew Paris', at 361-3.

account of John's reign were 'not merely worthless, but very misleading.'⁹ Part of the trouble lay in the way Paris's understanding and accuracy were blurred by his prejudices, notably those against foreigners and against the demands of royal and papal government.¹⁰ Vaughan also felt that Paris was simply not very bright. He was a man of 'limited intelligence and fixed ideas'. 'Posterity, in fact, has been tricked by the scope of his writings...into regarding him as the greatest historian of his age, instead of the quidnunc that he was'.¹¹

Vaughan's monograph, *Matthew Paris*, remains a tour de force, indispensable in unraveling the chronology of Paris's various works and establishing the relationship between them.¹² Since it appeared in 1958, a great deal more of value has been published, including, in 2009, a major article by Bjørn Weiler on Paris's conception of the historian's task.¹³ What, however, neither Vaughan nor subsequent scholars have done in any detail is to consider how Paris collected and wrote up his information and why he ordered it in such a chronological fashion.¹⁴ It is these questions of methodology and approach, lying at the heart of the *Chronica Majora*, which I will discuss in the first part of this chapter before going on to explore, in a way complimentary to Weiler's, Paris's attitude to truth and the pressures which made him, as he would have thought, depart from it. Finally I will look at Paris's last phase and in particular his account of the revolution of 1258-1259. It is often suggested that this reveals Paris's waning powers as he entered old age. I will argue, on the contrary, that it shows Paris's powers at their height.

Behind the great length of the *Chronica Majora* lies the way Paris collected and arranged his information. Although he was sometimes writing up the text considerably later than the events he described, he rarely arranged his material in any kind of continuous

⁹ Vaughan, 134; Galbraith, 37.

¹⁰ Vaughan, 143.

¹¹ Vaughan, 126, 151-2. Gransden, *Historical Writing*, chapter 16 is much more positive.

¹² Vaughan, in his book, is freely and, to my mind, fairly critical of F.M. Powicke, 'The compilation of the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xxx (1944), 147-60. Powicke's review of Vaughan's book (*English Historical Review*, lxxiv (1959), 482-5) is a masterpiece of condescension in which from Olympian heights he puts a cocksure youngster in his place. Powicke is, however, perceptive about Vaughan's attitude to Paris (p.482). Both Barbara Harvey and Hugh Lawrence have discussed with me Powicke's reaction to Vaughan.

¹³ B. Weiler, 'Matthew Paris on the writing of history' *Journal of Medieval History*, 35 (2009) [hereafter Weiler], 254-78. Other work relevant to Paris as an historian includes, J.C. Holt, 'The St Albans chroniclers and Magna Carta', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, fifth ser., xiv (1964), 67-88; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, chapter 16; G. I. Langmuir, 'The Knight's Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln', *Speculum*, xlvii (1972), especially 463-9; M.T. Clanchy, 'Highway robbery and trial by battle in the Hampshire eyre of 1249', in *Medieval Legal Records edited in Memory of C.A.F. Meekings*, ed. R.F. Hunnisett and J.B. Post (London, 1978), 25-48; H-E Hilpert, 'Richard of Cornwall's candidature for the German throne and the Christmas parliament of 1256', *Journal of Medieval History* 6 (1980), 185-98; S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Berkeley, 1987); H. Summerson, 'The king's clericulus': The life and career of Silvester of Everdon, bishop of Carlisle 1247-1254', *Northern History* (1992), 84-5; J. Le Goff, *Saint Louis* (Paris, 1996), 432-50; R. Reader, 'Matthew Paris and the Norman Conquest' in *The Cloister and the World. Essays in Medieval History in honour of Barbara Harvey*, ed. J. Blair and B. Golding (London, 1996), chapter 7; D. Carpenter, 'Matthew Paris and Henry III's speech at the exchequer in October 1256', in his *The Reign of Henry III* (London, 1996), chapter 7; R. Reader, 'Matthew Paris and Women', *Thirteenth Century England VII* (1999), 153-60; B. Weiler, 'Matthew Paris, Richard of Cornwall's candidacy for the German throne, and the Sicilian business', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26 (2000); Lloyd and Reader, 'Matthew Paris' (above note 2); A. Jotischky, 'Penance and Reconciliation in the Crusader States: Matthew Paris, Jacques de Vitry and the Eastern Christians', *Studies in Church History*, 40 (2004), 74-83; Hui Liu, 'Matthew Paris and John Mansel', *Thirteenth Century England XI* (2007), 159-73; J. Beverly Smith, 'Richard earl of Cornwall, Prince Dafydd ap Llywelyn and Tintagel castle', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* (2010), 31-42.

¹⁴ Nor is this really a theme of Powicke, 'The compilation of the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris', despite its title.

narrative.¹⁵ Instead, the *Chronica Majora* is divided up into chapters, some of only a few lines, some of a few pages, most somewhere between the two, and each usually hinging on some new piece of information. These chapters are then arranged for the most part chronologically. Many indeed start with a date so 1257 begins with Christmas (as do all Paris's years) and then has events occurring on Holy Innocents' Day (28 December), the octave of St. Stephen (2 January), 'around Christmas', 'in' and 'around' epiphany (6 January), the feast of the conversion of St Paul (25 January), the approach of Lent (21 February), the fifth ides of February (9 February), the fifth nones of March (3 March), the seventh ideas of March (9 March) and so on and so on.¹⁶ Between these precisely dated chapters are others tied into the chronological framework through beginning with words such as 'during these times', 'at the same time', 'in these days'.¹⁷

What makes the *Chronica Majora* so overwhelming in terms of scale is both the level of detail in the chapters and their chronological frequency, so that there can be several in a single month and over a hundred in a year. Another key feature is that Paris made no attempt to break the chronological sequence of the chapters in the cause of arranging them thematically. Instead, a chapter on one subject may be interleaved with others about different matters altogether. Because the chapters occur so often, this means that even events which lasted for no more than a few weeks or months, like an embassy, a parliament, or a military campaign, can be broken up into a series of discrete and non consecutive chapters. It is this bulletin like approach which makes the *Chronica Majora* sometimes appear like a cross between a daily, weekly and monthly newspaper.

The work which led to the *Chronica Majora* must have begun, as Vaughan appreciated, with Paris making notes of information almost as soon as it came in.¹⁸ In no other way could he have maintained his level of detail, given that the *Chronica Majora* is manifestly a fair copy, sometimes written up years later than the events described. It was thus very different from some monastic chronicles into which events were jotted down more or less as they occurred. What is also clear is that between the notes and the fair copy, there was an intervening stage in which the notes were expanded into a draft more or less the same as the final version. The best proof of that lies in the last section of the *Chronica Majora* for 1258-59, which was written out not by Paris himself but by one of his assistants.¹⁹ This assistant is explicit, in the obituary he pens of Paris, that he is merely the copyist not the author, yet he provides a full text, absolutely characteristic of everything which has gone before.²⁰ That text must, therefore, have been written up from a full Parisian draft. Something of the process of creating the final draft may be reflected in the cases where, by some slip, the *Chronica Majora* seems to preserve both an early draft and a later, fuller account of the same event.²¹ It may be reflected too in the odd disjunctions between the *Chronica Majora* and the chronicle of Paris's friend and fellow St Albans monk, John of Wallingford, a chronicle based on the *Chronica Majora*, but with a good deal of information not found within it.²² Both give an account, under 1256, of how workmen were overcome by

¹⁵ For the time lag, see Vaughan, 8-9, 59-61.

¹⁶ *CM*, v, 601-618.

¹⁷ *CM*, v, 611, 612, 613, 632, 643 etc. etc.

¹⁸ What follows builds on the brief remarks found in Vaughan, 9, 136.

¹⁹ *CM*, v, 695 note 2.

²⁰ See below note 27.

²¹ Thus in 1257 Paris says envoys were sent to France to prolong the truces, but in another account, perhaps representing an earlier draft, he says they were sent for 'secret' reasons: *CM*, v, 611, 620. For other possible examples see *CM*, v, 114, 136 (on the Jews); v, 490-1, 496-7 (on Grosseteste's miracles); 504, 523 (on John de Gray); 649, 651 (on the king's return from Wales); 688, 695 (on the house of the Franciscans at Bury).

²² For John, see R. Vaughan, 'The chronicle of John of Wallingford', *English Historical Review*, lxxiii (1958), 66-77. There is no published text of his chronicle which is found in BL Cotton Julius D vii. However, since

fumes escaping from a drain they were digging in London. The two narratives have a few words in common but, apart from that, the language is different.²³ Since Wallingford adds details to Paris, he was not simply abbreviating the *Chronica Majora*. Rather, the words in common may be drawn from the initial notes of the event from which Paris and Wallingford then wrote up their own separate accounts.

The final draft, if we may call it that, was presumably in a cursive hand, rather than in the formal book hand of the *Chronica Majora* itself.²⁴ It was probably written on a series of separate leaves and it was from these, shuffled into chronological order, that the *Chronica Majora* itself was ultimately copied. This would explain how, through the misplacing of a leaf, a chapter sometimes appears out of sequence, and how, through the failure to discard leaves containing earlier drafts, there can sometimes be two accounts of the same event.²⁵ It would also explain, through the accidental dropping out of a leaf, how there is material in John of Wallingford's chronicle completely absent from Paris's. Thus it is Wallingford who gives a detailed account of the mistreatment by Geoffrey de Lusignan of one of the king's cooks, although Paris knew of the incident (he mentions it in his *Liber Additamentorum*) and it was just the kind of thing he liked to record. That he had written about it, but had somehow mislaid the leaf (as opposed to this just being Wallingford's own work) is suggested by another curious fact, namely that, at this precise point in the *Chronica Majora*, Paris also omits the start of a 'colloquium' of the bishops which met in the octave of the Epiphany at London. Instead he has the bishops materialising in his narrative without any explanation of their presence. This was surely because the leaf which had the assault on the king's cook, also contained, or was attached to, the account of the London colloquium, and so in missing the one, Paris also missed the other.²⁶

Doubtless the time scale in which Paris moved from notes to final draft varied, but it could be short. Indeed, since the text of the *Chronica Majora* seems to continue to just before Paris's death, he was writing up the draft promptly and fully right down to his end.²⁷

John died at the St Albans cell of Wymondham in 1258, the chronicle became known locally and was copied quite fully at St Benet at Hulme and, with many more omissions, at Norwich: *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, ed. Sir H. Ellis (Rolls Series, 1859); *Bartholomaei de Cotton Historia Angicana*, ed. H.R. Luard (Rolls Series., 1859). Luard's text indicates in larger type the passages which are not found in Paris (and thus in effect what is original to John). Unfortunately, Ellis's edition does not do this. Vaughan prints (pp.70-7) the original material between 1100 and 1258 which had not already appeared in the two Roll Series volumes. A proper edition of John's chronicle would shed light on St Albans' methods but would not reveal hitherto unknown historical detail.

²³ *Oxenedes*, 188; *CM*, v, 600. Words in common are 'quidam fossores' 'calamos/calamum aqueductus' 'fulgur...de terra/ de terra fulgur'.

²⁴ For Paris's cursive hand, see R. Vaughan, 'The handwriting of Matthew Paris', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 1 (1953), 376-94 at 387.

²⁵ Vaughan, 9. See above note 19 and *CM*, v, 611-2, 618, 620-1 (on the return of the abbot of Westminster and the elect of Salisbury). For an example of a very misplaced chapter in 1258 see below note 127.

²⁶ *Oxenedes*, 175; *CM*, v, 359-60; vi, 406; Vaughan, 'John of Wallingford', 72 and see his comment on 68. Another passage not found in Paris is where Henry III first swears to go on a pilgrimage to Pontigny and then changes his mind: *Oxenedes*, 177. For record evidence on this see *CR 1251-3*, 433. Wallingford's chronicle also seems the only source for Richard of Cornwall destroying his fish wears in accordance with Magna Carta: *Cotton*, 131.

²⁷ The final chapter of the *Chronica Majora* concluded with the statement, 'It is to be known that thus far wrote the venerable man, brother Matthew Paris'. The scribe then added that the subsequent text was by another brother, unworthy to unlatch Paris's shoe. The scribe followed this observation with a drawing of Paris on his death bed, under the rubric 'here died Matthew Paris', which would seem to imply that Paris passed away soon after the last events recorded in the *Chronica Majora*. For the obituary and drawing see *CM*, v, 748 note 1, illustrated as the volume's frontpiece, and online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vii, f.218v. For comment, Vaughan, 7-8 and Sir Frederic Madden's introduction to *Matthaei Parisiensis Historia Anglorum*, ed. Sir F. Madden, 3 vols. (Rolls Series, 1866-9) [henceforth *HA*], i, at p.xxiii note 2.

This promptitude is confirmed by a passage near the close of the *Chronica Majora* where Paris expresses uncertainty as to whether Richard of Cornwall, returning to England, had taken an oath to accept the reforming enterprise, only for the immediately succeeding chapters to give precise information about such an oath.²⁸ The passage expressing ignorance must have been written soon after the first news came in, otherwise it would have been overtaken by the arrival of more exact intelligence. When Paris himself came back to the drafts to write up the *Chronica Majora*, he doubtless touched them up stylistically. He also made additions in the light of subsequent events. Paris was an inveterate reviser, and sometimes added new information in the margins of the *Chronica Majora* itself. Yet the work of copying, could also be a fairly mindless process, hence the various mistakes and repetitions.²⁹ Since many of these were probably carried over from the final draft, it is clear that the latter was not checked, or not checked carefully enough.³⁰

Paris did not labour alone. Vaughan identified no less than fifteen scribes who helped in copying out his various works.³¹ His assistants also helped with the collection of information, manifestly so for the period in the second half of 1248 when Paris was absent in Norway. Despite this, the *Chronica Majora* has a verbatim (and often quoted) record of a speech the king made to parliament. It also states that papal envoys saw the king at Windsor on the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September), a detail which must have been noted at the time.³² One of Paris's assistants was John of Wallingford, whose chronicle, largely copied from the *Chronica Majora*, was written out in his own hand and ran from the earliest times down to 1258 (the year of his death). John put his name to the work but modestly said it was simply 'excerpted from the work of diverse historians'.³³ At the very least he was an able abridger for the whole of his chronicle would not run to much more than 200 printed pages. It may also be that some of his material, which was absent from the *Chronica Majora*, reflected his own collecting efforts and writing rather than simply being part of Paris's lost or discarded drafts. Another St Albans monk was certainly an able historian, for the continuation of the *Chronica Majora* from Paris's death down to 1261 provides an independent and highly valuable account of these years.³⁴

The scriptorium at St Albans, with Paris surrounded by his assistants, may suggest parallels with Chartwell, when Churchill was producing his historical works. Whether John of Wallingford or the 1259-1261 continuator ever supplied draft chapters for Paris to touch up as did Chartwell's assistants for Churchill, we will never know. Both the modesty of Wallingford about his work and the self effacing nature of the continuator - he refused to give his name and was unworthy, he said, even to unlatch the shoe of his great predecessor - hardly suggest this happened on any scale. The uniqueness of Paris's efforts is revealed by

²⁸ *CM*, v, 732-4; for an earlier example see Vaughan, 9.

²⁹ For mistakes and repetitions, Vaughan, 37-8.

³⁰ Sometimes, however, repetitious passages are marked up for deletion (for example, *CM*, v, 527, 564), and, of course, we cannot know where the draft was corrected. Powicke, in his review of Vaughan's book (*English Historical Review*, lxxiv (1959), 484) asked how Paris could have written up the *Chronica Majora* if all he had was notes to go on. He thus posited a lost original from which the present text was copied. In effect, as Vaughan himself might have pointed out, Paris's very full drafts, often done soon after the events they recorded, were the lost original.

³¹ Vaughan, 'Handwriting', 384.

³² *CM*, v, 20-1, 23.

³³ Vaughan, 'Wallingford', 67.

³⁴ The implication of the obituary (see above note 27) is that the continuation ran on in the *Chronica Majora* itself. It is not there now, however, and the only text of it is that copied into a continuation of Paris's *Flores Historiarum* made, as I have argued, at Pershore abbey: *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H.R. Luard, 3 vols. (Rolls Series, 1890) [henceforth *FH*], ii, 426-70; D.A. Carpenter, 'The Pershore *Flores Historiarum*: an unrecognised chronicle from the period of Reform and Rebellion in England', *English Historical Review*, cxxvii (2012), 1343-66.

what happened after his death. The continuator was an able and diligent man. His account of 1260, his only full year, covers twenty-one printed pages and has thirty-five chapter headings, but this pales before Paris's last full year, 1258, which takes up 67 pages and has 104 headings.³⁵ The continuator was neither collecting information as frequently as Paris, nor writing it up in such abundance. His account of Henry III's visit to France to ratify the 1259 treaty runs to about three pages. Paris's account of the visit in 1254 runs to ten.³⁶ Equally striking is what happened after the continuator died or retired in 1261, for there was no one at St Albans to take his place. Instead, as I have argued elsewhere, the *Flores Historiarum*, which preserves the continuator's work, was carried on between 1261 and 1265 at Pershore abbey. Historical writing at St Albans was dead for more than a generation.³⁷ Paris's labours were unique. When he laid down his pen at the end of 1250, as it turned out temporarily, he understandably reflected in a poem on the 'rest' he would now enjoy.³⁸

Sheer volume, of course, is nothing without accuracy. How accurate is the *Chronica Majora*? It is here that a yawning gap opens up in Parisian studies. There has been no attempt to fact check the *Chronica Majora* between 1234 and 1259 against the voluminous government records and other sources of the period. Vaughan, indeed, admittedly with much else to do, cited not a single government record in his footnotes. Later historians have usually tested Paris's accuracy merely as a byproduct of other studies. The results have often seemed to confirm Vaughan's views of Paris's unreliability.³⁹ His transgressions come in various shapes and sizes, ranging from minor slips over dates and details to complete misrepresentations of events.⁴⁰ The latter sometimes resulted from Paris commenting in the light of hindsight. Thus his knowledge that the Castilian threat to Gascony in 1253-4 never materialized led him to allege, quite unfairly, that it was more or less invented by the king to extort money from his subjects.⁴¹ Even worse are examples where Paris, to suit his own agenda, seems simply to have made things up. In 1252, for example, he narrated a furious quarrel between Henry III and the master of the house of the Hospitallers in Clerkenwell. In Paris's story, Henry threatened to revoke the order's charters, using powers equivalent to those of the pope, while the master complained bitterly of the king's injustices. The only record evidence at this time, however, bears on a dispute not with the Templars of Clerkenwell but with the London house of St Thomas of Acre. This argument raised issues quite different from the challenge to rights enshrined in charters. One cannot help suspecting that Paris had heard vaguely of a quarrel involving one of the crusading orders in London, and, on that basis, had invented the confrontation with the Templars. His purpose, in so

³⁵ *FH*, ii, 440-61; *CM*, v, 661-729.

³⁶ *FH*, ii, 437-8, 440-2, 446; *CM*, v, 467-8, 475-84.

³⁷ For the cessation of historical writing at St Albans and its later revival, see V.H. Galbraith, *The St Albans Chronicle 1406-1420*, xxix and A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), 4-5.

³⁸ *CM*, v, 197-8.

³⁹ For example, Holt, 'The St Albans chroniclers and Magna Carta', 68-9, 78-9, 82, 84; Langmuir, 'The Knight's Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln', especially 463-9; Summerson, 'The life and career of Silvester of Everdon', 84-5; Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 432-50, especially 432, 434, 444-5, 450.

⁴⁰ An odd example of a mistaken date concerns Henry III's visit to St Albans in the second half of 1251. Paris dated this visit to the octave of the nativity of the Virgin (15 September) whereas Henry's itinerary shows it took place between 28-30 August: *CM*, v, 257-8. One wonders if this was a case where Paris's notes failed to give a date and he supplied it later incorrectly from memory. For another example of a mistake concerning Henry's itinerary see *CM*, v, 51-2. Here Paris dated Henry's visit to Huntingdon to Hilary 1249. In fact it took place in the following August.

⁴¹ *CM*, v, 423-5, 445, vi, 284 note 1, 287. The reality of Henry's fears is well argued in J. O. Ellis, 'Gaston de Béarn: A Study in Anglo-Gascon Relations, 1229-90' (Unpublished Oxford D. Phil. Thesis, 1952), 179-80. See also J.R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament 924-1327* (Oxford, 2010), 211-3.

doing, was to illustrate his oft repeated claim (largely unjustified) that the king was resorting to papal methods to annul the rights of his subjects enshrined charters.⁴²

Paris's errors and embellishments are, however, very far from the whole story. Quite often the wonder is not that he got things wrong, but that he recorded them at all. No one else did. When he was in error, he was not always to blame. Holt is witheringly critical of his failure to present a correct text of the 1215 Magna Carta. Yet Paris did not obtain an authentic copy of the 1215 Charter until after writing his account of 1215 in the *Chronica Majora*, and thus had to rely on Wendover's text, which conflated the versions of 1215, 1217 and 1225. When Paris at last got an authentic copy, perhaps as late as the 1250s, he went back and revised Wendover's effort in its light.⁴³ If, moreover, one works through a year of the *Chronica Majora*, correlating its information with other sources, one gains a powerful sense of how conscientiously Paris captures information as it comes in. Thus in 1257 Paris tells of how, on the feast of the conversion of St Paul (25 January), the bishop elect of Winchester, John of Gatesden and Peter des Rivaux were sent as envoys to France to prolong the truce. Sure enough the patent rolls show that on 12 January the three were issued with letters of credence for their mission.⁴⁴ Two chapters later, Paris says that 'around this same time' the queen was conceded the Longespee wardship. The letters patent to that effect were dated 3 January.⁴⁵ Three chapters on Paris records, beginning this time with a vague 'in the same year', the election and the king's acceptance of a new bishop of Coventry. This was correctly placed for local material shows the election took place at the end of January while the letter patent restoring the temporalities was issued on 17 February.⁴⁶ Paris begins the next chapter, describing the rising of the Welsh, with an 'at the same time', which would indicate that it occurred in the early months of 1257, exactly the dating found in the *Annales Cambriae*.⁴⁷ Paris also mentions the attempted mediation of Richard of Cornwall, something confirmed by a letter patent of 10 February.⁴⁸ These facts are but the harvest of a couple of

⁴² *CM*, v, 339; *CR 1251-3*, 242-3; see M.T. Clanchy, 'Did Henry III have a policy?', *History*, 53 (1968), 209-11; Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III*, 78-9; Summerson, 'The life and career of Silvester of Elverdon', 84-5; F.M. Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward* (Oxford, 1947), 324 and note 2. Vaughan singles out (p.134) as 'Perhaps the most blatant example of his abuse of historical material', Paris's account of papal demands for taxation in 1244, including speeches for and against, which was simply lifted from Roger of Wendover's account of a similar episode in 1226: *CM*, iii, 103; iv, 374-5. There are many other cases where one suspects speeches have been largely made up; for example Richard of Cornwall's in 1238: *CM*, iii, 477-8.

⁴³ Holt, 'The St Albans Chroniclers and Magna Carta', 82-7; *CM*, ii, 589-98. The revision in the *Chronica Majora* was not entirely successful because Paris still mixed in some clauses from 1217. He made a much better job of the version destined for Tynemouth (a cell of St Albans) found in BL Cotton Vitellius A xx, fos.93v-97. This begins as the Wendover conflation but then becomes a pretty accurate version of the authentic 1215 text, which it would seem that Paris had obtained or recognised in the very course of making the copy. Paris also went back and doctored the early sections copied from Wendover, adding in the margin (sometimes in his own hand and sometimes in that of an assistant) the passages he now had from 1215. Susan Reynolds rightly sees the result as representing 'an intelligent and careful attempt to produce a 1215 text from what had started as a not uncommon sort of conflation': S. Reynolds, 'Magna Carta 1297 and the legal use of literacy', *Historical Research*, 149 (1989), 241, note 54. Even before he had engaged with the authentic text, Paris has been making corrections to the Wendover version. He had noticed that it omitted 'vel de alio tenuerit' from the clause on the remarriage of widows. This he now supplied in his own hand, although the rest of the charter was copied out by an assistant. I hope to discuss this more fully on another occasion.

⁴⁴ *CM*, v, 611; *CPR 1247-58*, 537.

⁴⁵ *CM*, v, 612; *CPR 1247-58*, 536; M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence. Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), 274. Paris also mentions the queen receiving the Cantilupe wardship. This came from Edward which perhaps explains why there is no record evidence for the transfer.

⁴⁶ *CM*, v, 613; *AM*, i, 376-80; *CPR 1247-58*, 542.

⁴⁷ *CM*, v, 613-4; *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. Williams ab Ithel (Rolls ser., 1860), 91-3.

⁴⁸ *Foedera*, I, i, 354 (*CPR 1247-58*, 541).

months. Paris kept up collecting them in the same painstaking, tolerably accurate fashion for a quarter of a century.⁴⁹

Paris has not merely a record of factual accuracy. He can also show a genuine understanding both of situations and of people. He appreciated very well the ties between England and Gascony and the importance of Bordeaux.⁵⁰ According to Beverley Smith, in a recent study, he ‘makes numerous informed references to the problems that confronted Henry III in Wales [and] often reveals a perceptive appreciation of the significance of the events he describes’.⁵¹ When it comes to individuals, one may feel Paris captures some of the essence of both Louis IX and Simon de Montfort.⁵² His picture of Henry III himself is both nuanced and, in part, convincing. Paris certainly excoriates Henry’s simplicity, and flowing generosity to foreigners, but these were indeed very notable characteristics of the king. Paris also admires Henry’s piety and even sometimes praises the astuteness and wisdom of his secular conduct. In one passage, he has Henry wishing to end the oppressions of the sheriffs ‘pia ductus intentione’, which catches exactly the monarch’s good, if often ineffective, intentions. That this observation replaced one which was probably far more critical, suggests a real advance in Paris’s understanding of the king.⁵³

Paris’s unreliability and incomprehension is not the only reason why he has fallen foul of later commentators. They have also disliked the way that he wrote history in series of chronological bulletins. ‘A man with strong views on current evils’, wrote Galbraith, ‘he saw a certain drift in events which he could better have expressed if it had then been possible to group his facts under subjects instead of the rigid chronological summary imposed upon him.’⁵⁴ Vaughan observed that ‘Matthew made no attempt to organize his chronicle, as, for instance, did William of Malmesbury, in the form of a coherent narrative covering a period of years: instead he collected all the information he could obtain, and recorded it in rough chronological order.’⁵⁵ Paris was certainly familiar with Malmesbury’s work.⁵⁶ In his own saint’s lives, moreover, although they could be divided into chapters, he did not write the

⁴⁹ It is surprising, in view of his usual reputation, how much there is testifying to Paris’s understanding and reasonable standard of accuracy: Madden *HA*, iii, pp.xxix-xx; Vaughan, 136 which acknowledges that on the whole Paris was careful with chronology and that few events or documents are badly misdated and p.85 on the *Liber Additamentorum* being a ‘reasonable well-ordered collection’; Clanchy, ‘Highway robbery and trial by battle in the Hampshire eyre of 1249’, 25-48; Carpenter, ‘Matthew Paris and Henry III’s speech at the exchequer in October 1256’; Hui Liu, ‘Matthew Paris and John Mansel’; Jotischky, ‘Penance and Reconciliation in the Crusader States: Matthew Paris, Jacques de Vitry and the Eastern Christians’, especially 74-5, 82-3; Beverly Smith, ‘Richard earl of Cornwall, Prince Dafydd ap Llywelyn and Tintagel castle’. I am grateful to Henry Summerson for letting me see a copy of his unpublished paper ‘Issues of law in the chronicles of Matthew Paris’. Summerson shows how Paris’s accounts of legal actions varied between the erroneous and the substantially true. His conclusion is that ‘there are probably as many instances of record evidence largely or wholly corroborating the chronicle as there are of contradiction’. Taking Paris as a whole, I would put the balance decisively in his favour.

⁵⁰ *CM*, iv, 594; v, 19, 277-8, 370.

⁵¹ Beverly Smith, ‘Richard earl of Cornwall, Prince Dafydd ap Llywelyn and Tintagel castle’, 31.

⁵² I consider Simon de Montfort later. There is no space here to discuss Paris’s treatment of Louis IX but I cannot agree with Le Goff’s very hostile account in his *Saint Louis*, 432-50. It fails to recognize that Paris is a strictly contemporary witness, which makes what he says about Louis all the more valuable. Le Goff also contradicts himself by making extensive use of Paris’s testimony.

⁵³ *HA*, ii, 389. Paris’s revisions are discussed more fully below. For juxtaposition of praise and criticism of Henry, see *CM*, v, 55-60, with the praise (for his conduct in the Winchester robbery case) sharpened in *HA*, iii, 47 and *FH*, ii, 361; *CM*, v, 114; 130; 316-7, 319-20; 449-51, 482; 539, 567, 569, 573-4. Paris gave a balanced account on the career of the king’s leading minister, John Mansel: Hui Liu, ‘Matthew Paris and John Mansel’.

⁵⁴ Galbraith, 39-40. Galbraith suspected that the annual summaries which Paris introduced into the *Chronica Majora* were an attempt to achieve ‘some sort of synthesis of discrete events’. They are, however, too short to be very effective, although the account of the year’s weather with which they usually begin is useful.

⁵⁵ Vaughan, 143. Weiler too (p.268) has reservations about this method.

⁵⁶ Vaughan, 104, 129;

chronological bulletin type history found in the *Chronica Majora*; indeed he did not have the material to do so.⁵⁷ Had he adopted a more reflective, thematic approach, he could have freed himself from the awful labour of recording events almost on a daily basis. Even if addicted to that, he could at least have shuffled his leaves into themes, and thus told the story of connected events in one sequence, instead of breaking them up.

So why did Paris write as he did? The obvious answer is that he was simply employing the chronological, bulletin like method he inherited from Roger of Wendover, a method shared with many other medieval chroniclers. Clearly there is truth in that for the pattern of the *Chronica Majora* is indeed that of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* writ large.⁵⁸ Yet it is quite wrong to think that Paris was just mindlessly following the path of his predecessor. On the contrary, he believed deeply in correct chronology and laboured to maintain it. Thus under 1239 he indicated the proper place for an out of sequence chapter with the following note: 'this election [to the bishopric of Chester] took place before the birth of Edward [the king's son]; it should be transferred therefore and inserted here', the here referring to where the chapter was to go.⁵⁹ The effort involved in maintaining his chronology was considerable for Paris did not, of course, receive his information in chronological order. Three consecutive chapters, dealing with events in February and March 1254, depended on news travelling from Berwick on Tweed, from Bayonne in Gascony, and simply from St Albans itself.⁶⁰ This cannot have been the sequence in which Paris actually heard the news. The re-arrangement of the information according to when it happened rather than according to when it became known can be detected throughout the *Chronica Majora*.

Paris was perfectly aware that he was telling stories in stages for he frequently informed readers that there would be a further installment in due course.⁶¹ On one occasion, he even went on to justify his method observing that 'those things which are connected together can by no means be narrated together'.⁶² 'Why not?' one might demand, but the answer is very clear for Paris believed passionately that events in history must be put in their proper 'order' or 'time'. Thus he sometimes said not merely that a later 'sermo' would tell more about a story, but that it would do so 'in its time' or 'in its order' or in its 'place and time'.⁶³ When, by contrast, Paris occasionally connected events together in defiance of chronology, by for example joining together what happened earlier and later in a year, he could feel the need to justify himself: 'these things happened when the year had proceeded a good way; the order, however, is distorted but changed out of necessity; for where there is pain, there the finger'.⁶⁴ Given the amount of 'pain' ('dolor') around, that Paris did this so

⁵⁷ See for example his life of Edmund of Abingdon: C.H. Lawrence, *St Edmund of Abingdon. A Study in Hagiography and History* (1960), 222-89. The same is true of Paris's account of the abbots of St Albans in *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H.T. Riley, 3 vols. Rolls Ser., 1867-9), with ii, 183-324 being Paris's own work. I have not studied this in any detail, but my impression is that Paris's *Historia Anglorum* and *Flores Historiarum* follow, in abbreviated form, the pattern of the *Chronica Majora*. The *Historia Anglorum* has the same type of chapter headings. In the *Flores*, the headings become more frequent in the section between 1241 and 1249 which Paris wrote out himself. In both works one finds Paris's characteristic pointing on to future events discussed below; for example, *HA*, ii, 465; *FH*, ii, 242, 312, 338.

⁵⁸ As Galbraith pointed out (p.20), Paris also inherited Wendover's 'constitutional' attitude.

⁵⁹ *CM*, iii, 540 note 5.

⁶⁰ *CM*, v, 426-7.

⁶¹ For example *CM*, iii, 471; iv, 83, 188-9, 198, 202, 628; v, 22, 74, 102, 117, 136, 439, 470, 513, 516, 622, 680, 737.

⁶² *CM*, v, 135-6: 'Sed quae simul contigerunt, simul minime poterunt enarrari'.

⁶³ *CM*, v, 439, 470, 513, 516, 737.

⁶⁴ *CM*, iv, 618. See also the marginal note in *CM*, iv, 56 and heading in *CM*, iv, 146 where Paris used the word 'anticipatio' to indicate that events which took place some time ago were inserted at these points.

rarely shows how strongly he believed in telling history in its proper chronological sequence.⁶⁵ To do that was part of what the great labour of the *Chronica Majora* was about.

It was not a labour for its own sake. Paris stood in a Christian tradition dating back to Bede which saw the historian's task as that of presenting a gallery of good and bad examples.⁶⁶ These examples were themselves situated within an historical framework created by God working his purpose out, a purpose being realised both on a great apocalyptic scale (for Paris believed the last days might be near) and in the events of daily life, where God rewarded good deeds and punished bad.⁶⁷ Paris, therefore, had a profound reverence for events themselves for they were God's events. From them, posterity could learn about divine judgement and the consequences of good and bad actions. Thus Paris said he had written the *Chronica Majora*, 'for the utility of subsequent posterity, for the love of God and for the honour love of the blessed Alban protomartyr of the English, lest age and oblivion destroys the memory of modern events'.⁶⁸ Paris wrote these lines at the end of 1250, having taken the decision, subsequently reversed, to end his great work. When some years later, he recalled that decision, he was even more explicit about why had written.

'For it is good, to the praise of God, to preserve in writing the events of notable things, in order that that those coming after by reading may be warned to avoid evil things which deserve punishment, and encouraged to do good things which God will fully reward.'

The sentiments are, of course, conventional but they were deeply felt.⁶⁹ It was not for Paris to impose his own order on events. He did not 'did not presume to determine the future'.⁷⁰ It might, after all, be unclear how things fitted into God's plan, or whether someone's motives were pure or perverted. It was only God, as Paris said, who knew the secrets of men's hearts. Mere mortals had to await 'the judgement and proof of subsequent actions'.⁷¹ In following those actions, and allowing each to be judged on its merits, the structure of the *Chronica Majora* was perfectly adapted. That was equally true where Paris felt God's hand was clear. Thus he was able to conclude one chapter about the exactions of king and pope by observing that 'a following *sermo* will elucidate more fully in its time' how, 'by a just judgement of God', such plunder brought no advantage to either party.⁷² Likewise, his treatment of Louis IX's crusade in a series of separated chapters, many of them dealing with the extortions and

⁶⁵ For an instance where Paris broke his normal rule, see *CM*, iv, 89 where a reference to Gilbert Basset in 1241 led him to give an account of Basset's death and other events later in the year. See also his addition about Geoffrey de Langley in *CM*, v, 340. Paris did, on occasion, tell stories in a continuous sequence, for example the alleged crucifixion by the Lincoln Jews of a Christian boy in 1255: *CM*, v, 516-9, although more is added in 1256 (pp. 546, 552.) Paris also ran together his accounts of parliaments in 1244 and 1245 although this is so clumsily done as to suggest an element of error or incompetence: *CM*, iv, 362-73, 395. That Paris was troubled by the result is suggested by the different accounts in the later *FH*, ii, 283 and *HA*, iii, 291.

⁶⁶ For Paris's statement of his purpose, copied from Wendover, see *CM*, i, 1-2. For discussion, see Weiler, 258-62, 267-8. For Bede's example, see J. Campbell, 'Bede I' in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), especially 10-19.

⁶⁷ For signs of the last days, see, *CM*, iv, 603-4; v, 30-2, 35, 261. 175-7.

⁶⁸ *CM*, v, 197;

⁶⁹ 'Bonum quippe est ad Dei laudem eventus rerum notabilium scribendo perpetuare, ut subsequentes legendo castigentur, mala quae digna sunt ultione devitanda, et bona quae Dominus plene remunerat operando': *HA*, iii, 319-20. This is from Paris's *Abbreviatio Chronicorum*. The passage in which they come is discussed more fully later.

⁷⁰ *Gesta Abbatum*, ii, 324.

⁷¹ *CM*, v, 102.

⁷² *CM*, v, 470.

pride of the French, allowed him to remind readers again and how a *'sequens sermo'* would reveal God's punishment of such conduct.⁷³

Paris's belief that history was God's history, therefore, did not mean he was excluded from commenting upon it, when he felt called upon to do so, which was not infrequently. Indeed, Paris's judgements and their passionate expression are both the most arresting feature of the *Chronica Majora*, and also, for many later historians, the most unfortunate. This is because, so it is said, they both blurred Paris's understanding and undermined his honesty, leading him to invent speeches, as we have seen, and also alter documents, hence in good measure Vaughan's damning comment that he was 'basically unreliable as an historical source'.⁷⁴ Paris seems also convicted of hypocrisy since he appears perfectly aware of the historian's need to be truthful. In a well known passage he lamented that

'the condition of historians is hard since if true things are said, men are provoked; if falsities are commended to their writings, God, who separates truth tellers from flatterers, does not accept it.'⁷⁵

Yet does not this passage both help us understand Paris's alleged transgressions and provide what, in Paris's eyes, would have been their justification? For the 'truth' Paris was talking about here was not 'truth' in terms of factual accuracy (although that was certainly important), but truth in the sense of the historian's duty to avoid flattery and to distinguish between right and wrong. What was likely to annoy 'man' was not some mistake over a date but passages in which Paris cried out against the oppressions of king, pope, archbishop, friars and aliens. If, in this cause, Paris added to a document or elaborated a speech, that was to tell the truth not to tamper with it. Thus the passage Paris inserted into a letter of the Patriarch of Constantinople to the pope, the most grievous tampering with of a document which Vaughan detected, precisely began by affirming the need to be truthful:

'And that we may arrive at the very pith of the truth, many powerful and noble men would obey you, if they did not fear the unjust oppressions... which you practice.'⁷⁶

As Bjørn Weiler has put it, Paris's 'desire to offer a moral interpretation... required him to present events in a manner that made their deeper meaning, their ethical value and message, discernible to his readers... In order to fulfill this function, it was at times required of those writing history that they press home moral lessons, that they go beyond what actually happened to elicit the deeper meaning of events'.⁷⁷

Did Paris, in his own time, feel under pressure to tone down his opinions? It is easy to dismiss his lament about the truth being provocative as no more than one of his 'sententious platitudes'.⁷⁸ Yet it actually follows lines in which Paris confessed that he had indeed omitted material 'although true and manifest', 'lest the truth breeds enemies which

⁷³ *CM*, v, 77, 87-8, 102, 117, 170-1. See Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 440. For references to God's power and will, see *CM*, iv, 91, 100, 151, 225, 238; v, 492-3, 523.

⁷⁴ Vaughan, 130-4.

⁷⁵ *CM*, v, 469-70. See Madden, *HA*, iii, pp.xxix-xxx.

⁷⁶ Vaughan, 132-3. See Weiler, 274-5.

⁷⁷ Weiler, 275-6 and 258-62 with the quotations at 275 and 276. Likewise, Clanchy observes that Paris wanted 'to give facts life and significance' in line with his didactic purpose: Clanchy, 'Hampshire highway robbery', 47.

⁷⁸ Vaughan, 151.

often happens'.⁷⁹ It was also in similar terms that Paris explained his decision to give up writing the *Chronica Majora* at the end of 1250.

'Here brother Matthew proposed to terminate his Chronicles on account of certain imminent dangers. For if true things are said of the powerful and commended to writing, wars (*bella*) are bred for him [Matthew]; if things are passed over in silence, or good things are written for bad, the whole work will be mutilated, and vehemently condemned and discarded as flatteries, adulation and falsities'.⁸⁰

Paris then proceeded to reflect bitterly on how he had been laboring in a barren field amidst man's ingratitude, before expressing the hope, in the passage quoted earlier, that his work would nonetheless benefit posterity by showing how God rewarded good and punished evil. All this comes in Paris's *Abbreviatio Chronicorum*, which he wrote 'very likely' after 1255.⁸¹ That he still felt moved to write so fully and emotionally about the abandonment of his work (more fully indeed than in the *Chronica Majora* and the *Historia Anglorum*) shows how deeply he felt about the issue.⁸² Had his writings indeed brought down 'wars' upon his head? And did those wars force him to retreat? The answer to these questions brings us to another remarkable feature of his historical writing, namely the way in which he went back over some of his criticisms and either excised them or rewrote them in less astringent terms. Historians have usually advanced two explanations for Paris's revisions. One is that he was preparing copies of his work for presentation, notably to the king. The other is that he came to feel more sympathy for the king and some of his other targets as he got to know them better, and as he approached old age.⁸³ These views are not mutually exclusive but they do reflect very differently on Paris as a historian. In the second case, he changes his mind but retains his integrity, in the first, he stands accused, on his own terms, of displeasing God by omitting truths and writing falsities.

There was nothing impossible about Paris changing his mind. He could acknowledge purely factual mistakes and recognize that stories he had once believed were untrue.⁸⁴ He may genuinely have come to take a more sympathetic view of Henry III, as we have seen. There is, however, nothing in the *Chronica Majora* to suggest that Paris ever changed his mind in so substantial and settled a fashion as to necessitate the scale of revisions which he actually carried out.⁸⁵ Writing in 1258, near the end of his career, he still catalogued the abuses of Henry's rule and cried out against his simplicity.⁸⁶ Even the acknowledgement

⁷⁹ *CM*, v, 469.

⁸⁰ 'Hic quoque proposuit frater Matheus Cronica sua terminare, propter imminetia quedam pericula. Si enim de potentibus vera dicantur et scripture commendentur, bella parantur ei; si taceantur, vel bona pro malis annotentur, mutilabitur, et de blandimentis, adulationibus et falsitatibus graviter opus totale condempnabitur et redarguetur': *HA*, iii, 319 (the *Abbreviatio Chronicorum*) and pp.xxix-xxx.

⁸¹ Vaughan, 113-4.

⁸² Contrast *CM*, v, 197-8; *HA*, iii, 96-7.

⁸³ Madden, *HA*, iii, pp.xxxii-iii; Luard, *CM*, iii, pp.xiv-xv; iv, pp.xii-xiii; Vaughan, 123-4; Gransden, *Historical Writing to 1307*, 370-1.

⁸⁴ For Paris's correction of a particular factual error, see D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), 245 note 11. Paris initially believed letters from the east about Louis IX's successes but subsequent events, as he lamented, showed the stories were utterly false. See *CM*, vi, 167-9, where the comment at the bottom of p.169 shows Paris's belief. The headings pointing to the falsity of the letters (pp.167-8) were written later: BL Cotton Nero D i, f.99 (note how 'sophistica' did not fit into the space left and had to be written down the side of the text.) Also later are the remarks in *CM*, v, 87, 118. Paris commented (p.118) that the episode weakened his trust in letters.

⁸⁵ In Weiler's view (p.274) Paris became more outspoken with age, not less.

⁸⁶ *CM*, v, 676, 680, 681, 688-90, 741.

that Henry was personally a ‘rex Christianissimus’ was put in the mouth of a hated royal official, Simon Passelewe, who was trying to exact money from St Albans.⁸⁷

The earliest revisions Paris carried out were, in fact, quite openly prudential since their stated aim was to remove from the *Chronica Majora* passages with might give ‘offence’. Thus Paris went through the text, Vaughan suggests around 1250, and wrote ‘vacat’ and sometimes ‘vacat quia offendiculum’ against a whole series of passages which were to be omitted in a fair copy of the *Chronica Majora* then being prepared.⁸⁸ On one occasion, the marginal annotation even acknowledged that the passage to be omitted was true: ‘vacat non quia falsum sed provocans’.⁸⁹ Paris had clearly not changed his views. Once the clerk had made a mess of the new copy, by failing to exclude all the marked passages thus rendering it useless for public inspection, he put many of them back in at the foot of the page, doubtless on Paris’s instruction.⁹⁰ Paris, of course, when he resumed the *Chronica Majora*, after the break in 1250, continued in exactly the same vein as before.⁹¹ Paris’s second attempt at revision was to his *Historia Anglorum*, the abbreviation of the *Chronica Majora* which he probably wrote between 1250 and 1255. This he bowdlerized even more thoroughly than he had the *Chronica Majora*, writing in his own hand new versions of offending passages either over erasures or on slips of vellum pasted above the original text.⁹² He was even prepared to conceal how far subsequent events had revealed God’s judgement, cutting, for example, the observation under 1242 that ‘the end of the affair, *finis negotii*’ showed how much the king’s attempt to get money from the church had displeased God.⁹³

Most of the passages omitted in the attempted revisions of the *Chronica Majora* and the *Historia Anglorum* were attacks on the king, his relations (especially Archbishop Boniface), the friars and the pope. It may well be, as we have said, that Paris’s aim in making the expurgations was to lay the foundations for a fair copy which could be presented to the king, or safely inspected by him and his court when they came to St Albans. In 1247 Henry had asked Paris to record the great ceremony in which he had brought a phial of Holy Blood to Westminster. He was thus well aware that a chronicle, which recorded his doings, existed at St. Albans, where of course he and Paris often met.⁹⁴ Many magnates and ministers were equally well informed, for they too often gave Paris information.⁹⁵ What on earth would have happened had Henry asked to inspect Paris’s work? It was not even as though the opprobrious comments were buried in the text. They were up there in red in the chapter headings. Had Henry seen the annal for 1247, with its account of the ceremony of the Holy Blood, he would have loved the heading ‘Concerning the firm faith of the king during the illness of Edward his son’. But he would have been appalled, had he turned on a folio and seen ‘How the lord king enriched his brothers to such an extent that he pauperized himself’. Not surprisingly the word ‘pauperized’ was deleted in one of the revisions. If

⁸⁷ *CM*, v, 684. For Paris’s technique of expressing views through third parties, see Weiler, 273-4.

⁸⁸ Vaughan, 117. Examples are *CM*, iii, 265, 294, 475, 487, 490, 493, 616-8; iv, 3, 63, 228, 230, 231, 252, 457, 458, 505, 561.

⁸⁹ *CM*, iii, 381.

⁹⁰ Vaughan, 117. This is my interpretation of what happened.

⁹¹ I wonder whether there was sometimes a note of irony in Paris’s alterations. For example (*HA*, iii, 51 and 52 note 3; Vaughan, 122), where Paris replaced fierce criticism of the way the friars sold indulgences for the benefit of the crusade with ‘in order that Christ’s faithful should not be deprived of the advantage of the indulgence...[the friars] courteously received a redemption according to the means of each.’

⁹² Madden, *HA*, iii, pp.xxxii-iii; Vaughan, 120-3. Vaughan (p.123) thought the changes were probably made between 1256 and 1259.

⁹³ *HA*, ii, 461 note 5.

⁹⁴ *CM*, iv, 644-5. For Henry asking Matthew Paris to record, lest the memory of it be lost to oblivion, the recovery of Thomas of Savoy from illness through the intercession of Edward the Confessor, see *CM*, vi, 93-4.

⁹⁵ See Vaughan, 12-18 for an impressive list of informants.

Henry or his courtiers had actually read the *Chronica Majora*, the consequences would have been explosive.⁹⁶ The work was surely kept locked away during royal visits. Well might Paris refer to the ‘bella’ he could suffer by telling the truth.

Were these ‘bella’ raised most directly by forces within St Albans itself? Paris said that he had written the *Chronica Majora* ‘for the love of God and the love of the blessed protomartyr St. Alban’.⁹⁷ The monks of St Albans were clearly the first and primary audience for the work, which they had backed with abundant resources.⁹⁸ But were they troubled by the results? There was firstly the danger, as we have said, that the king or some other victim would actually want to see what had been written. The consequences of that would have been as disastrous for St. Albans, as for Matthew himself. Another problem was that the *Chronica Majora* threatened to be un-exportable. There was, of course, a long tradition of chronicles passing between religious houses, with one house copying that of another. Yet the *Chronica Majora*, in Vaughan’s words, never ‘seems to have passed into general circulation’ and was ‘was virtually unknown outside St Albans’.⁹⁹ Vaughan thought this was ‘extraordinary’. It was not extraordinary at all. There was no way the monks were going to export what could only get them into trouble.

The same fate, and for the same reason, nearly overtook the only one of Paris’s chronicles which did have a substantial afterlife. This was his *Flores Historiarum*. Paris had written the *Flores*, a highly abridged version of the *Chronica Majora*, for Westminster Abbey. The section between 1241 and 1249 is in his own hand and has a several original passages about the Abbey. Some of the chronicle would have appealed to Henry. Thus Paris told how he was building the new abbey ‘in the manner of a most Christian king’.¹⁰⁰ Yet there were other passages in a very different vein. Paris could not restrain himself. He included venomous remarks from the *Chronica Majora* and sometimes added to them. ‘These things I have been led to write about, that the inconstancy of a womanly king might be known to posterity’, he declared.¹⁰¹ This was not the sort of thing which could be sent to Westminster Abbey of all places. Nor was it. Paris ceased writing the *Flores* in 1249, and then the text seems to have languished at St Albans till the early 1260s when it was obtained by Pershore abbey. It was only later in that decade that it finally reached Westminster, by which time Paris’s offensive passages had lost topicality and were anyway buried beneath later material.¹⁰²

Not everyone at St Albans was worried about Paris’s tone. John of Wallingford in his own chronicle, echoed his master’s sentiments entirely. Paris’s continuator was another matter. He admired Paris intensely, yet his own work between 1259 and 1261 was far less strident in tone.¹⁰³ While enthusiastic about the reform of the realm, he set out fully and

⁹⁶ *CM*, iv, 639, 650. That Henry could read is at least implied by the episode discussed in D.A. Carpenter, ‘The sense of humour of King Henry III’, the fine of the month for November 2011 on the website of the Henry III fine rolls project: <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-11-2011.html>.

⁹⁷ *CM*, v, 197-8.

⁹⁸ For Paris’s Benedictinism and loyalty to St Albans, see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, 372-4.

⁹⁹ Vaughan, 154-5. See above note 20 for the way passages in the *Chronica Majora* descended through the chronicle of John of Wallingford.

¹⁰⁰ *FH*, ii, 289; see also p.321 on Henry and Edmund of Abingdon.

¹⁰¹ *FH*, ii, 312.

¹⁰² See Carpenter, ‘The Pershore *Flores Historiarum*’.

¹⁰³ As Gransden observes (*Historical Writing to 1307*, 377-8,417). It should be noted, however, that Gransden here comments on the *Flores* between 1259 and 1265, whereas I argue in ‘The Pershore *Flores Historiarum*’ that only the 1259-1261 portions come from St Albans and are by Paris’s continuator. In saying that the continuator admired Paris I am assuming that he was the author of the obituary at the end of the *Chronica Majora*. See below note 107.

fairly the complaints the king made against his council in 1261.¹⁰⁴ He also, more remarkably, made no criticisms of the pope although he had ample opportunities to do so.¹⁰⁵ Striking too is the role he played in the second and final revision of the *Chronica Majora*, which Vaughan dates to near the end of Paris's life. This revision was more extensive than the earlier effort since it involved not the marking up passages for deletion, but the rewriting of them altogether, much as in the *Historia Anglorum*. Vaughan believed that Paris made these changes at the end of his life because he felt his previous criticisms had been unjust, but, as we have seen, there is nothing in the *Chronica Majora* to suggest such a change of heart.¹⁰⁶ The great majority of the changes, moreover, were made not by Paris himself but by his continuator.¹⁰⁷ Since at least one of them can actually be dated to after Paris's death, that may be true of others.¹⁰⁸ The changes are not out of line with those Paris himself had made to the *Historia Anglorum*, but that the continuator carried on making them, suggests that he was genuinely worried by the tone of the *Chronica Majora*.

Paris, therefore, fearful of outside reaction and under pressure from within, was on occasion prepared to please man and tone down his writings; hence perhaps the troubled way in which he recalled his decision to abandon the *Chronica Majora* in 1250. Nonetheless, he bent to the world with the greatest reluctance. The *Chronica Majora* remained to the end a sustained critique of the age. Over twenty-five years, Paris assaulted evil, praised good, and testified to the truth as he saw it, trying where possible to trace the working out of God's plan. If he had known how far his views have offended some later historians, he might well have shaken his head and reflected that in telling the truth he had indeed provoked man. The material for Paris's critique was provided by his massive record of events, arranged chapter by chapter in chronological order. Paris was certainly capable of adorning the tale in the cause, as he would have seen it, of bringing out important truths. But a comprehensive analysis and fact check of the *Chronica Majora* would testify to his colossal labours and establish his reputation as a hugely informed and often perceptive chronicler of his times. In Paris's mind the record and the critique were inseparable. If modern historians can distinguish between them, it should be to applaud the first and at least understand the second. Both make the *Chronica Majora* an absolutely unique work of history.¹⁰⁹

In the final part of this paper I will turn to the last phase of Paris's life and thus to his account of the revolution of 1258-59. In the *Chronica Majora*, the beginning of the revolution at the Westminster parliament of April and May 1258 is written up in Paris's own hand, as, to this point, is the whole of the *Chronica Majora*'s final volume which begins in 1254 and is now

¹⁰⁴ *FH*, ii, 463-4. This makes one think that the continuator had access to some version of 'the lord king's grievances against his council': *DBM*, nos.30,31 and H. Ridgeway, 'King Henry III's grievances against the council in 1261', *Historical Research*, lxi (1988).

¹⁰⁵ See most notably *FH*, ii, 432-4, about the pope's favour (having been misled) to the elect of Winchester and about papal taxation (described without comment.)

¹⁰⁶ Vaughan, 117-19, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Vaughan, 118-19. Vaughan says that the hand which made the changes is that which finished the *Chronica Majora*. It is thus the hand which wrote out the obituary of Paris. Assuming this is the hand of the composer of the obituary, not just that of the copyist, and assuming also that the composer was identical with Paris's continuator (which the obituary itself implies), then it was the continuator who was responsible for putting in the last changes to the *Chronica Majora*. No original text of the continuation survives, only a later copy probably made at Pershore abbey for which see Carpenter, 'The Pershore *Flores Historiarum*'.

¹⁰⁸ If the very last part of the *Chronica Majora* was copied after Paris's death, then it must have been later still that a passage in 1259 offensive to the Dominicans was marked 'vacat': *CM*, v, 742. It is also the continuator who was probably responsible for the complimentary passage about Montfort in 1258 written over an erasure (p.703) for which see below note 168.

¹⁰⁹ See the very just appraisal in Gransden, *Historical Writing to 1307*, 356.

preserved in the British Library.¹¹⁰ Soon after the Westminster parliament, however, in fact from just before the start of the Oxford parliament in June, a new hand takes over, copying out the remainder of the *Chronica Majora* from what, as we have seen, must have been very full Parisian drafts. The last chapter transcribed was that recounting the execution of Walter de Scotteny at the end of May 1259, and the presumption is that Paris died soon afterwards.¹¹¹

Vaughan himself was critical of Paris's performance in this last phase: 'it is clear that Matthew understood very little of the nature and significance of the baronial reform movement, and still less of the events of 1258'.¹¹² There are certainly odd gaps in Paris's account, but the explanation for these, as will be seen, is more complex than simply a lack of understanding. In fact, Paris's account of the revolution often shows remarkable knowledge and insight, as well as exemplifying some of the points of technique we have already discussed. It also brings out another facet of Paris as a historian, not so far discussed, namely the importance he attached to documents and his desire to preserve them.¹¹³

Paris gives a characteristic account of the parliament held at Westminster in April and May 1258. Although it lasted all told for less than a month, he divides his narrative, which takes up five printed pages, into four separate chapters.¹¹⁴ The first two are consecutive, but between the second and the third, and the third and the fourth, there are chapters dealing with other events, most of them either dated by Paris to this period or datable to it from other sources.¹¹⁵ Paris's account of the parliament is factually valuable for it preserves otherwise unknown, but perfectly believable, confrontations between William de Valence, on the one side, and Simon de Montfort and Richard de Clare on the other.¹¹⁶ It also gives Paris the opportunity to point to the truth as he sees it, with the result that it is difficult to distinguish (if they are distinguishable) his own critique of Henry's rule with that offered at the parliament. When Paris comes, however, in the final chapter, to the king's actual capitulation, he leaves the reader with a sense of anti-climax. Paris builds up with a long list of accusations hurled at Henry and then continues:

'The king however, coming to himself, although late, since he understood the truth of the accusations, humbled himself, declaring that he had too often been bewitched by evil counsel, and he promised under a great oath, on the altar and feretory of Saint Edward, that, fully and openly correcting his former errors, he would readily comply with his native born subjects'.¹¹⁷

By itself, as an explanation of the king's capitulation, this can hardly be complete. After all, Henry had faced vocal criticisms at parliament after parliament in the 1240s and 1250s and had never before acknowledged their truth and given way to reform. Why did he do so now? At the time two explanations were offered. The official one, given in letters patent issued by the king on 2 May, and later in a baronial letter to the pope, was that the king had agreed to

¹¹⁰ BL Royal MS. 14 C vii. Images of the v are freely available on line at

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vii f.157r onwards.

¹¹¹ *CM*, v, 695 note 2; 747-8; see above note 27. In the section between the Westminster and Oxford parliaments which is still in Paris's hand, there is a missing leaf. I do not think this affects the hypothesis advanced below: *CM*, v, 694 note 1.

¹¹² Vaughan, 140.

¹¹³ See Gransden, *Historical Writing to 1307*, 361.

¹¹⁴ *CM*, v, 676-8, 680-1, 688-90.

¹¹⁵ So for the date of Simon's Passelewe's mission to Waltham, St Albans and Reading (*CM*, v, 682-8), see *CPR 1247-58*, 625. For the Franciscans arriving at Bury (*CM*, v, 688), see *The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds 1212-1301*, ed. A. Gransden (London, 1964), 23.

¹¹⁶ *CM*, v, 676-7; J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge, 1994) [hereafter, Maddicott], 154.

¹¹⁷ *CM*, v, 689.

reform of the realm quite willingly in return for the prospect of a tax to prosecute the Sicilian business.¹¹⁸ The second reason, unofficial, was that the king been coerced into submission by an armed march on his hall at Westminster, which left him for a moment fearing he was a prisoner. Since this account, in the annals of Tewkesbury abbey, is circumstantial and probably from a news letter, it carries conviction.¹¹⁹ Yet Paris says nothing about such an episode. Why?

One reason might be the effects of age, something which nearly all commentators seem to detect in Paris. ‘But it is fair to note that Matthew was at this time an old man, no doubt with failing powers’, wrote Vaughan as some excuse for the account of 1258.¹²⁰ Well steady on! At this time Paris was around sixty, much the same age as I am now.¹²¹ That may, of course, serve to confirm the hypothesis of decline, but many historians do excellent work in their sixties and indeed later than that. Life expectancy in the thirteenth century was much less than it is today, but there is no reason to think that the aging process, especially for well fed Benedictine monks, was much different.¹²² This does not rule out the possibility that Paris was increasingly impeded by ill health, but the evidence for that is hardly convincing. Madden and Vaughan drew attention to the decline in his handwriting, but while it may become looser in his later works, it remains perfectly legible, even in the last example which we have from a document copied after March 1259.¹²³ Sometimes the trouble seems to be more that Paris needed a new nib or a darker ink.¹²⁴ There is also nothing in the fact that the last part of the *Chronica Majora* was copied out by another scribe.¹²⁵ That Paris remained perfectly able to write, we have just seen. Most probably he had simply fallen behind in making the fair copy of the *Chronica Majora*, as he had often done before, with the result that it was written up by another scribe after his death. In any case, whatever Paris’s physical state, the last part of the *Chronica Majora* shows no decline in energy or quality. The 67 printed pages of 1258 place it in a mid table eleventh in the twenty-two years post 1235. Post 1248, when Paris started to copy documents into his *Liber Additamentorum* rather than into his main text, it comes in fourth.¹²⁶ Indeed, there is more about 1258 than there is for any year between 1253 and 1257. If the text contains mistakes and repetitions, these had been equally characteristic of his earlier work.¹²⁷ Paris, moreover, as we have seen, was assiduous to the last in collecting information and writing it up into draft chapters. One of the last

¹¹⁸ *DBM*, nos.1,2; *CM*, vi, 400-1.

¹¹⁹ *AM*, i, 163-5; see Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, chapter 9 at 187-90.

¹²⁰ Vaughan, 140 note 1. For other references to Paris’s ageing, see Madden, *HA*, iii, p. xxi; Luard, *CM*, v, p. xv.

¹²¹ Or was when a draft of this paper was first given as a talk. One wonders whether this passage from Vaughan had some effect on Powicke, then in his seventies!

¹²² For monastic diet and life expectancy, see B. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993), chapter II, and pp.127-9 from which it appears that Paris lived considerably longer than the majority of fifteenth-century Westminster monks.

¹²³ Madden, *HA*, iii, p. xxi; Vaughan, 10; Vaughan, ‘Handwriting’, 388 and plate XVII (b), (c) and (d). My first impression, looking at Paris’s last known writing, was how neat it was: BL Cotton Nero D i, f.82 (*CM*, vi, 496), of which (d) above is a small portion.

¹²⁴ This comment is derived from looking at the last part of the *Chronica Majora* written by Paris in BL Royal MS. 14 C vii, images of which are now online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vii, f.157r onwards.

¹²⁵ For the view that this reflects his waning powers, see Madden, *HA*, iii, p. xxi; Vaughan, 10.

¹²⁶ For the effect of the *Liber Additamentorum*, see Vaughan, 67.

¹²⁷ *CM*, v, p. xv and note 2; Vaughan, 37. One striking misplacement is the chapter which records ‘in the same year [1258]’ John Mansel’s foundation of a religious house at Bilsington in Kent: *CM*, v, 690-1. In fact this took place in 1253. That Paris were here copying from a draft from 1253 which had re-emerged is suggested by the fact (as Hui Liu has pointed out) that Mansel is described as ‘provost of Beverley’ whereas from 1256 Paris gives him his new title of treasurer of York. See Hui Liu, ‘Matthew Paris and John Mansel’, 172.

things he wrote, the account of the quarrel in 1259 between Simon de Montfort and Richard de Clare, shows him at both his most informed and most vivid.¹²⁸

Why then did Paris give so sketchy account of the king's capitulation in 1258? The barons had good reason for keeping the march on the king's hall quiet since it conflicted with their claim of royal consent, consent which meant no justification for revolution was necessary since none had taken place. But I find it unbelievable that Paris was ignorant of this dramatic event, which must have been widely known however much the barons wished to conceal it. Rather I would suggest a different explanation. Far from failing to appreciate the significance of what had happened, he appreciated it all too well. What had taken place was a unique act of violence against the king. Paris had written about rebellions against Henry III before, expanding Wendover's account of Richard Marshal's in 1233-34, but that was both a long time ago, and had not involved any direct assault on the king. Indeed Richard Marshal had been careful to respect the king's person.¹²⁹ Where he saw it clearly, Paris believed in drawing out the truth, but here, in 1258, he was unsure where the truth lay. Had the barons, as the chronicler Thomas Wykes later put it 'gathered together against their lord and king and anointed of the lord'?¹³⁰ Even in 1258, Paris would have acknowledged that Henry's almsgiving, masses and general religiosity weighed heavily in the balance against his faults.¹³¹ He did not deserve to be treated like King John. But if, then, Paris was troubled by the political morality of the king's coercion, why did he not he say so? The answer is that this would have suggested that the reform of the realm, in which he intensely believed, was flawed from the start. Paris, therefore, preferred to cover up what had actually happened and go along with the official version that Henry had accepted reform perfectly freely.¹³²

There is one other factor which helps explain Paris's emasculation of the Westminster parliament. When he wrote up his account he had no idea that things were going to turn out right. Instead, he feared the country was on the brink of a civil war. He ended the section about the parliament by telling how a group of leading magnates, 'taking precautions for themselves, confederated together; and since they vehemently feared the traps and snares of the aliens, and greatly suspected the nets of the king, they went about protected by arms and horses and a copious company'.¹³³ Had he known that the barons would soon be firmly in the saddle with Henry going along 'willingly, *gratanter*' with their reforms¹³⁴, he might have been readier to acknowledge how the revolution had begun. God would then have given his judgement on the baronial methods. There are several reasons for thinking that Paris wrote up his account of the Westminster parliament very soon afterwards and certainly before the re-assuring events at Oxford and Winchester in June and July. The *Chronica Majora*, in its last years, had sometimes lagged considerable behind events. The

¹²⁸ *CM*, v, 744-5; Maddicott, 180.

¹²⁹ *CM*, iii, 253.

¹³⁰ *AM*, iv, 118-9. Wykes was here adapting verse 2 of Psalm 2.

¹³¹ For this view (put into the mouths of Llywelyn and Louis IX) see *CM*, iii, 290; iv, 231-2; Paris was clearly impressed by Henry's behaviour when he stayed at St Albans in March 1257 and November 1258: *CM*, v, 617-8, 724.

¹³² Although Paris went along with the official version and revealed nothing about how the king had been coerced, he also was silent about the bargain over Sicily. He certainly knew about the offer of help as it is contained in the barons letter of explanation to the pope which he copied out himself (*CM*, vi, 400-1). The letter, however, was written after Paris had finished his account of the Westminster parliament, if my arguments are correct. It is possible, therefore, that Paris did not know about the bargain, but my feeling is rather that he dismissed it (rightly) as having no meaning.

¹³³ *CM*, v, 689-90.

¹³⁴ *CM*, v, 695-8. By an extraordinary mistake the printed text (p.696) reads 'graviter' rather than the 'gratanter' which is quite clearly what is written in the manuscript: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vij, f.210r.

section around May 1257 was probably written as late as March 1258.¹³⁵ Yet there is no sign of any time lag in the narrative of the Westminster parliament. Nothing in it shows any knowledge of later events. This is not because Paris, in writing up the *Chronica Majora*, had stopped looking forward. Indeed, just before the Westminster parliament, he observed that a ‘sequens sermo’ would reveal the resistance to the papal envoy, Mansuetus. This, however, merely pointed on a few chapters to the events in late April and early May.¹³⁶ There are indeed signs that when writing up the *Chronica Majora* for April, Paris did *not* know about later events. Thus, just before commencing his account of the parliament, he included a short chapter about the king’s punishment of the citizens of London. When he wrote this he did not know of the death of the former mayor, Ralph Hardel, which had taken place by 28 May, for this news he added in the margin.¹³⁷ Within his account of the parliament itself, Paris told how the Lord Edward, in order to raise money, had given lands to William de Valence in return for some of his superfluous treasure. He then observed that for both of them this was a bad omen, in William’s case because it suggested he would be despoiled of his superfluities. Would Paris have written as tamely and vaguely as this, had he known that, within three months, Valence would be expelled from the kingdom and stripped not merely of his superfluities but of everything he had?¹³⁸

Paris, therefore, missed out the violent denouement of the Westminster parliament not because he was failing but because he was troubled by its propriety and meaning.¹³⁹ Is that concern even reflected in his handwriting? It is certainly a remarkable fact that the tendentious account of the king’s capitulation is one of the most illegible parts of the *Chronica Majora*, with the ink faint and the pen scratchy, as though Paris just wanted to get it down as soon as possible.¹⁴⁰ His fears for the future may also explain why he decided to bring the *Chronica Majora* right up to date at this point.¹⁴¹ Having done so in early May, he did not resume writing up the text for at least a couple of months, for the first chapter after the parliament tells how the north winds blew throughout April, May and the greater part of June, destroying hope of future crops.¹⁴² It was as though Paris was waiting on events before he returned to the *Chronica Majora*. When he did so, it was with the knowledge that the revolution had succeeded. That Paris was worried is a tribute to his perception as an historian, for there are good reasons for thinking the kingdom was indeed close to civil war.¹⁴³

Beyond his account of the immediate crisis, there continue to be odd gaps in Paris’s record of 1258-59. At the Oxford parliament, he described the oath to support the baronial enterprise, and the appointment of Hugh Bigod as justiciar by the nobles, but he has nothing

¹³⁵ *CM*, v, 644 seems to point on to pp.663,675.

¹³⁶ *CM*, v, 679-80, 686.

¹³⁷ *CM*, v, 675 and note 1; *CR 1256-9*, 225. For the image of the folio:

¹³⁸ *CM*, v, 679. After the end of the account of the Westminster parliament, there is a distinct change of pen and ink, which is consistent with a delay before the next chapter was written:

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vii, f.209r (*CM*, v, 690). Changes of ink and pen are not noted in Luard’s edition. However, as noted below, Paris’s pen needed changing at this point, so too much should not be made of this.

¹³⁹ For examples of Paris omitting or keeping quiet about actions which he thought shameful, see *CM*, v, 676; vi, 284 note 1.

¹⁴⁰ The writing begins to deteriorate from around ‘Et ut brevibus concludatur..’. There is a slight improvement near the end of the chapter: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vii, f.209r; *CM*, v, 689-90.

¹⁴¹ Paris had also brought the *Chronica Majora* right up to date at the end of 1250: see Vaughan, 60-1. Powicke’s criticism of Vaughan here in his review of *Matthew Paris*, I find unconvincing: *English Historical Review*, lxxiv (1959), 483.

¹⁴² *CM*, v, 690.

¹⁴³ Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, 195-6.

about the council of fifteen and its power to select the king's ministers and control his seal, which lay at the heart of baronial control. Instead, there is just the vague statement that the king swore 'willingly' to comply with the counsels of the magnates.¹⁴⁴ Yet Paris cannot be blamed for these lacunae for the precise authority of the council was never publicly proclaimed, almost certainly because it was considered too revolutionary to be openly acknowledged.¹⁴⁵ There was equally no attempt to proclaim something else missing in Paris, namely the stipulation that three parliaments were now to meet annually, in this case perhaps because that was not considered revolutionary enough. Parliament in 1258 was still viewed as a baronial assembly which needed no explanation beyond those present at the Oxford parliament.¹⁴⁶ What is striking, and testimony to Paris's belief in the importance of documents, is that he was clearly frustrated by this failure to proclaim the reforms. 'However, they [the barons] still did not plan to publish what had been decided', he grumbled, having told how (in July 1258) the Londoners were asked if they would adhere to the 'statutis baronum'.¹⁴⁷ When Paris did get documents from this period he made sure to preserve them. The writ commissioning the inquiry of the four knights was gummed into the *Liber Additamentorum*, while the baronial letter of explanation to the pope was copied out in his own hand, as was also the draft legislation of March 1259 on suit of court.¹⁴⁸ In a heading he appended to the latter, in the *Liber Additamentorum*, one senses both his pleasure at having some 'statuta baronum' to record and his relief at the consensus which produced them:

'This is the new provision of the magnates of England published at the New Temple in the month of March in the forty-third year of the reign of King Henry III for the common utility of all the kingdom and the king, by whose consent and will that provision and publication proceeded'.¹⁴⁹

As Vaughan noted, this provision is the last example we have of Paris's hand. To the end, he remained as assiduous in copying out documents as he did composing the drafts of the *Chronica Majora*. Indeed, the provision of March 1259 was probably the last thing Paris did write for (as Paul Brand observes) it breaks off at the bottom of a page in mid sentence, with the following page left blank.¹⁵⁰ Fittingly, it looks as though it was in the act of writing that Paris was struck down. The provision of March 1259 is scarcely the most riveting of documents, and perhaps the initial excitement of getting the text followed by the boredom of actually copying it out, hastened Paris's demise!¹⁵¹ But in copying it out at all, he set a

¹⁴⁴ *CM*, v, 695-8. see above note 134.

¹⁴⁵ The nearest to any proclamation is *DBM*, no.7.

¹⁴⁶ For the absence of representatives at the early reform parliaments see, J.R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament 924-1327* (Oxford, 2010), 242. Maddicott, however (pp.233-51), stresses the centrality of parliament to the movement of reform. For other comment on the documents of 1258 (with which I do not entirely agree) see D.R. Clementi, 'The documentary evidence for the crisis of government in England in 1258', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, I, no.2 (December 1981), 99-108 and C. Valente, 'The Provisions of Oxford: assessing/assigning authority in time of unrest', in *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe*, ed. R.F. Berkhofer III, A. Cooper and A.J. Kosto (Aldershot, 2005), 25-41.

¹⁴⁷ *CM*, v, 704.

¹⁴⁸ *CM*, vi, 396-7, 400-6, 507, 496; Vaughan, 182-3.

¹⁴⁹ *CM*, vi, 496. Paul Brand wonders whether Paris was here copying from a writ, but that he felt moved to do so is itself significant: P. Brand, *Kings, Barons and Justices: The Making and Enforcement of Legislation in Thirteenth Century England* (2003), 32-3.

¹⁵⁰ Brand, *The Making of the Common Law* (London, 1992), 336; Vaughan, 10; BL Cotton Nero D i, f.82 (*CM*, vi, 496). The illustration in Vaughan, 'Handwriting' plate XVII (d) is of the final part.

¹⁵¹ For the whole of what was copied by Paris (Luard conspicuously failed to publish the whole text), see Brand, *The Making of the Common Law*, 337-9.

standard his successor could not meet since, as the blank page shows, the latter made no attempt to finish off the document.¹⁵²

Looking at 1258-1259 more generally, Paris appreciated the vigour with which the realm was being reformed. 'The magnates of England', he wrote, in one of his very last chapters, 'attended in salutary fashion to the reforms ('statutis') which they had started, assiduous and confederated together in wholly abolishing evil customs and injuries and corrupt practices'.¹⁵³ In terms of detail, Paris knew about the consent of the Londoners to the revolution, the inquiry of the four knights, the justiciar's dispensation of justice, the restrictions on the sheriffs, and the Ordinance of the Magnates.¹⁵⁴ Had he lived he would doubtless have put in something about the provisions of March 1259 and referred to the copy in the *Additamenta*. His view that Henry appeared to accept the reforms 'willingly' is supported by a contemporary news letter.¹⁵⁵

Paris's account of 1258-1259 stands up in other ways. When set against the official record, he clearly exaggerated the brutality of the attack on Shere in Surrey by the men of the bishop elect of Winchester. But official records themselves can mislead, and Paris's account of the way Henry refused justice to the victim, John fitz Geoffrey, may well be more accurate than that found in the plea roll of the new justiciar, with its need to justify the revolution. Paris thus gives a far more emollient picture of Henry, who begs John to withdraw his complaint and not bring scandal on the bishop. The plea roll, by contrast, alleges that he simply 'did not wish to hear him'.¹⁵⁶ Later, Paris's account of Richard of Cornwall's return to England early in 1259 is confirmed by record evidence.¹⁵⁷ Record evidence also shows him to be well informed about the fall of William de Valence's steward, William de Bussey.¹⁵⁸ If he speculates wildly about the crime of which the Jew, Elyas le Evesk was accused, he at least knew that it was related to Elyas's conversion to Christianity.¹⁵⁹

All in all, Paris's narrative of 1258-1259 is a remarkable achievement and one enhanced by a final jewel, namely the picture given of Simon de Montfort. Vaughan's statement that 'of Simon de Montfort [Paris] has little to say' is simply wrong, both for the period of Henry's personal rule and even more for the revolution of 1258-1259.¹⁶⁰ In Paris's first chapter about the Westminster parliament, Montfort nearly comes to blows with William de Valence. In the last chapter, he complains about Valence before the whole parliament and demands justice.¹⁶¹ At the Oxford parliament, having, so Paris affirms,

¹⁵² The continuator did copy out the administrative and political part of what later historians call 'The Provisions of Westminster': *CM*, vi, 512; *DBM*, 148-57; Madden, *HA*, iii, p.xxiii note 2.

¹⁵³ See *CM*, v, 746; see also 704, 705. For a similar appreciation of this vigour, see the end of the newsletter in *DBM*, 96-7.

¹⁵⁴ *CM*, v, 704, 714, 715-6, 720, 744-5.

¹⁵⁵ *DBM*, 95 (where Henry is said to beg that none but Englishmen shall stay around him.)

¹⁵⁶ Paris, v, 708-9; TNA/PRO Just 1, 1187, m.1. For the episode, see S. Stewart, 'What happened at Shere?', *Southern History*, 22 (2000). I have argued that what, even in Paris's account, amounted to a denial of justice, was one of the sparks at the Westminster parliament which set off the revolution: Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, pp.192-3. I still think this is true but it should be noted that Paris himself (*CM*, v, 708-9) only recorded the incident after John renewed his complaint to the justiciar.

¹⁵⁷ Paris (*CM*, v, 733) said one fear was that Richard would bring back the Lusignans to England and this is confirmed by *CPR 1258-66*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ *CM*, v, 737-9; TNA/PRO Just 1/ 82, mm.24d, 36; Just 1/ 83, mm.13, 22. See Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, 327-8 and A.H. Hershey, 'The rise and fall of William de Bussey, a mid thirteenth-century steward', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, xlv (2000), 104-22.

¹⁵⁹ *CM*, v, 730; TNA/PRO 1187, m.10. This episode is discussed and Paris's errors pointed out in Summerson, 'Issues of law in the chronicles of Matthew Paris'. See R.C. Stacey, 'Elias l'Eveske', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/52245>, accessed 25 Jan 2012.

¹⁶⁰ Vaughan, 149. Vaughan was right, however, in seeing that Paris regarded Montfort as a 'naturalis'.

¹⁶¹ *CM*, v, 676-7, 689, Maddicott, 154.

voluntarily given up his royal castles of Kenilworth and Odiham despite spending much money on them, he threatens Valence with the loss of his head, if he does not make equivalent resignations.¹⁶² A little later, the king cries out that he fears Montfort more than all the thunder and lightening in the world, this because (so Paris speculates) the earl ‘vigorously and fervently prosecuted the provision, namely that they [the barons] should compel the king and all adversaries to stand by their counsels’. The confrontation itself has Paris at his most vivid and circumstantial for it occurs when Henry, going down river from Westminster to dine, was forced by an approaching storm to disembark at the palace of the bishop of Durham on the Strand, where Montfort was staying.¹⁶³ Next year, it is Paris, of course, who preserves the acrimonious quarrel with Richard de Clare, with Montfort angrily declaring that he did not care to live with men who were oath breakers and refused to accept the ‘statuta salubres’.¹⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, for Paris, Montfort’s presence is essential to the movement of reform, and it is gravely weakened by his absences in France.¹⁶⁵ No other baronial leader is given anywhere near the same prominence. Paris even shows insight into the moral imperatives which governed Montfort’s personal and political life. Thus it was in this last period that he rewrote an old passage for 1238 to say that Montfort, on his return from Rome, he ordered ‘in the name of justice’ his debts to be paid and everything which his ministers had taken from the common people to be restored.¹⁶⁶ In its concern with the oppression of the people, this mirrors exactly the terms of Montfort’s will, drawn up in December 1258. It also, of course, coincides with one of the main themes of the baronial reforms.¹⁶⁷ Were it not for Paris’s death, everyone would think these passages were written up with the benefit of hindsight.¹⁶⁸ In fact, Paris, perceptive and prophetic, captures brilliantly the driving force and ideological stance which were soon to make Montfort the ruler of England. Paris, far from being in decline in 1258-59, was at the height of his powers.

¹⁶² *CM*, v, 697; Maddicott, 160-1. As Maddicott observes, ‘In Paris’s account of the Oxford parliament, written soon after the event and long before Montfort had emerged as supreme leader in 1263, he is the only one of the reforming magnates whose particular activities are mentioned.’ Maddicott also points out (p.163) that Paris is the only source for how Henry, Montfort’s eldest son, pursued the Lusignans to France: *CM*, v, 703.

¹⁶³ *CM*, v, 706; Maddicot, 150.

¹⁶⁴ *CM*, v, 744-5; Maddicott, 180.

¹⁶⁵ *CM*, v, 737, 744-5; Maddicott, 177, 191, 357.

¹⁶⁶ This is written over an erasure in *HA*, ii, 409. The Latin is ‘Jussitque omnibus debitoribus suis omnia, que abstulerunt ministri eius a plebe, sub specie justicie, restitui et de injuria satisfieri.’ For the date of the changes to the *Historia Anglorum* see Vaughan, 123. For another passage in which Paris may reflect Montfort’s ideas, see Maddicott, 87.

¹⁶⁷ Maddicott, 175-6, 166-70.

¹⁶⁸ It is possible there is some hindsight in a passage in 1258 (*CM*, v, 703 and note 1; Maddicott, 163) which makes the French express astonishment that William de Valence dared to criticize Montfort: ‘a man so noble and born of such gentle blood and pre-eminent amongst everyone on both sides of the sea’ This is in the section of the *Chronica Majora* written by Paris’s continuator and is itself written over an erasure. It may therefore have been composed, as opposed to being merely copied, by Paris’s continuator: However, that would still leave a latest date of sometime in 1261 when, as argued in Carpenter, ‘The Pershore Flores’, the continuator stopped writing. In any case, with the sentiments expressed Paris would have entirely agreed.