The story of the Christian ‘new martyrs’ of the early Islamic period is thus a fascinating and important one for the religious history of the Middle East. It may, however, be a source of some present comfort that ‘the new martyrs of the early medieval period are all but invisible in the spiritual life of most Middle Eastern churches’ (p. 249) today.

Jonathan P. Berkey
Davidson College, Davidson, NC

doi:10.1093/ehr/cez411


This volume is the present offered to Rosamond McKitterick by her former students upon her retirement from Cambridge in 2016. The decision to include only contributions by her former Ph.D. students active in scholarship was a fortunate one: the sixteen articles in the book take the reader on a tour of the full range of McKitterick’s research interests over her long career. At the centre of this collection, which includes chapters on subjects as diverse as history-writing, liturgy, numismatics and pharmaceutical manuscripts, is, therefore, the emerita herself. The book as a whole portrays the work of one of the most important early medieval historians of the last generation through the research of her Nachwuchs (some of whom now hold professorships themselves)—a better way of honouring the new emerita and her work is hard to imagine.

The volume, edited by Elina Screen and Charles West, comes in three parts, each of which opens with a short introduction: knowledge of the past, manuscript transmission and the use of texts in rulership. As Marios Costambeys and Matthew Innes in the introductory Chapter One, these are three areas in which McKitterick has done pioneering work. Perhaps most importantly, she has put the early Middle Ages on the map as a period in which the written word was immensely important, and has shown time and again how research should take entire manuscripts (and not just editions of individual texts) on board in order to understand how written texts mattered in societies of the past. These questions and insights are important and influential for current research, to which the book as a whole bears witness.

Part One, ‘Knowledge of the Past’, centres on the question of how the past mattered for the early medieval present. In Chapter Two, Richard Matthew Pollard shows the unexpectedly high ‘impact’ of the work of Flavius Josephus in the Carolingian world. The next two chapters discuss the images of Rome used by Bede (ch. 3, Paul Hilliard) and Paul the Deacon (ch. 4, Marios Costambeys), respectively. Ingrid Rembold in Chapter Five analyses the uses of the past by Folcuin of Lobbes, who tried to make his Gesta into a vehicle of reconciliation by selectively remembering and forgetting the past. That the liturgy is also a form of history is made clear by Christina Pössel (ch. 6), who offers important perspectives on Walahfrid Strabo’s perception of the liturgy as by definition diverse and changing over time. Graeme Ward (ch. 7) continues this theme, by showing how Amalarius of Metz’s De ordine antiphonarii ‘amounts to a sort of universal history’ (p. 110).

Manuscripts and text transmission take centre stage in the second section, emphasising how the contents of codices are the result of active processes of

‘Why did the Vikings come to England?’ Eleanor Parker’s monograph opens with the question that continues to spark debate. This book, however, does not aim to answer that question (the endnotes of Parker’s introduction direct the reader to various influential studies that do attempt this) but rather a different one, hitherto untreated to this extent: how did medieval English writers from the eleventh century onwards imagine and interpret the arrival and impact of Scandinavians in England?

This book, then, is more about the people of medieval England than the Vikings; it explores the role of ‘the Danes’—as we are told the early medieval Scandinavians now popularly named ‘Vikings’—were commonly labelled...