Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors: Memory and Forgetting in France, 500-1200*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. xvi + 362 pp. Map, figures, notes, appendices, bibliography, and index. $79.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8122-4636-0.

Review by Abigail Firey, University of Kentucky

In the presence of students, a prominent American writer recently declaimed the (to me) astonishing hypothesis of Phantom Time, which, in its vulgate form, proposes that the years between 613 and 911 c.e. did not happen. The theory has its own Wikipedia article as well as a presence in blogs and websites ranging from the curious to the paranoid.[1] A lecture by the late Prof. Dr. Horst Furhmann, for 23 years president of the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, is cited in some of the discussions.[2] Prof. Fuhrmann's specialty was the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals; it is nice to know that the general public strives to keep up with advanced scholarship on such matters. It is even nicer to know that there is now a truly splendid book in English to which readers with these interests can be directed. Seldom has a first-rate historian made such exciting arguments *ex silentio*, or rather, *de silentio*. Constance Brittain Bouchard has traced with great precision striking absences in the historical records for the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, and has made an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship on how cultures construct and use memory—and also how they forget.

In limpid prose, Bouchard presents an archaeology of absence. Peeling back layer after layer of history and memory, beginning in the twelfth century and exposing the previous centuries, with particular attention to the Merovingian and Carolingian periods before reaching late antiquity, she delineates crucial lacunae from the late eighth and early ninth centuries in the contents of monastic cartularies (charter collections) (pp. 165-167), in monastic foundations (pp. 152, 168, 170-172, 174), and in records of aristocratic lineage (pp. 179-180); she also points to significant disruption in settlement patterns in Burgundy between the eighth and ninth centuries (pp. 163-164). Surrounding the holes is rich documentation of the memorable deeds of kings, bishops, abbots, holy men and women. Her technique of writing history backwards is essential to perceiving the gaps and patterns, and to aligning readers to the sight-line of memory. With less attention to the silences, Simon Schama did rather the same thing in *Landscape and Memory*; like Bouchard, he strove to reveal the retrospective creation of meaning in histories culled over centuries and the ways in which those collectively recovered memories are then polished and passed on to the future.[3] Bouchard's stories and evidence are less epic, but they have the same mythic bent as Schama's. The stature and legitimacy of dynasties, the sanctity of religious sites, and the association of those sites with those dynasties all depend on the memories that can be mustered to affirm them and, accordingly, on written documentation to affirm the validity of the memories.

The effect of this approach to history is to unhinge time. Indeed, *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors* begins with an allusion to the "arrow of time." As Bouchard writes, "The past does not stand still but rather is in constant flux as it is remembered, remembered indifferently, or forgotten" (p. 1). Echoing Einstein's comment that "the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubborn illusion,"[4] Bouchard sees the work of medieval scribes in the context of a "perception of the past and present as part of a seamless Now," in which "just as in late medieval art a donor, a monastery's patron saint, and the magi might all join together in adoration of the Christ Child... so five centuries of gifts and privileges would bind together a monastery's friends in the eternal present" (p. 29). Some historians may find this disturbing. But by first taking apart the chronology of the narratives shaped in the twelfth century and earlier and still recounted by modern historians, Bouchard demonstrates how to put together a new account—not, she explains, with the intent to produce one that is "more accurate" (p. 5),

but rather one that incorporates understanding of how it was created and why. The distinction between history and historiography is thus shown to be illusory, as well. Using the most prosaic of sources, charters and genealogies, and juxtaposing them to more obviously commemorative sources such as martyrologies and saint's lives, Bouchard reconstitutes history after identifying the elements of memory. By the end of the book, she has subtly developed a new chronology for the development of early medieval monasticism, as well as having overtly argued that our credence in Carolingian historiography could use a shake-up.

To understand history as a series of movable panels of time is not simply a metaphysical (or astrophysical) whim: it is a methodological necessity for medievalists. We "know" what we think we know about Carolingian monastic endowments because twelfth-century monastic personnel chose to present their communities in particular ways (chapters one and two). We "know" about the continuity of power in the Carolingian imperial dynasty, and its exercise to the exclusion of other dynasties, because of the familial connections crafted by later genealogists for the Carolingian house and the convenient absence of genealogical narratives for kin-groups such as the Etichonids or Robertians (pp. 180-192). We "know" about early Christian and late antique saints in Gaul because sixth- and seventh-century clergy redeveloped their churches to serve as destinations for pilgrims; in doing so, they "found" the long-ignored tombs and histories of the needed saints (chapter twelve). Modern medievalists are at the mercy of their medieval forebears, and Bouchard reminds us of this fact.

Medievalists, are, however, also in the fortunate position of being able to see the arcs of memory as they appear and disappear over places and centuries.   Much of the significant work on history and memory has treated modern traumas and the tension between commemoration and suppression of memories.[5] Bouchard's work shows how medieval history offers interesting displays of remembering and forgetting not only because of the number of centuries involved, but also because the cultivation, conservation, and obviation of memory occurs in a manuscript culture. When surveying the dates of surviving manuscripts, we may note with some regret that a text putatively from the ninth century survives only in manuscripts of the tenth century or later, and we might wonder idly about its interest for those later scribes and readers, but we tend to wonder more actively how closely to "the original" the later witnesses adhere. Bouchard invites us to reverse our priorities and to wonder what the later scribes were doing and why. She proposes that later copying of earlier material should not just be seen as a corruptive process in which texts become steadily degraded, whether through inadvertent errors in transcription or through deliberate alteration to falsify information, but as an act of conservation (pp. 31-37).   The reasons for conservation, Bouchard shows, could change over time. Although a cartulary might initially serve as an icon of community identity, assembled for a monastery's internal consumption (pp. 31-34), it could pass from having no legal value (being only a copy of the original documents in the archives) to substituting for the original documents as evidence to support the claims of chroniclers or litigants (pp. 38-40) alongside other records (pp. 40-52).

The line between conservation and creation is a thin one, as is seen in Bouchard's examples of "updated" charters, in which scribes replaced archaic forms of place names with ones intelligible in their own time (pp. 29-30, 36).

Theorists of memory have often noted the creative aspect of memory, and Bouchard's dry wit is evident in the opening sentence of chapter five: "Creative memory was at its most creative in the ninth century, when churchmen forged unprecedented and monumental runs of entirely false charters" (p. 63). Perhaps it is because I dislike any title framed as "An Age of …" that I find this chapter, "An Age of Forgery," less satisfying than the others. What seems to distinguish the "churchmen creating an imaginary past" (p. 63) from the exercises of memory detailed by Bouchard in other chapters is not only the perceived scale, but also the perceived purpose of devising texts to gain legal advantage, rather than to recover lost histories. Importantly, Bouchard observes that forged documents (by which she must mean charters or their analogues) about Charlemagne or Charles the Bald were created by the Capetians, not by

contemporaries of the Carolingians. The myth of Carolingian rulers supportive of the church, Bouchard proposes, could only seem credible to those at considerable temporal remove (p. 64). She turns, therefore, from the documentary evidence of charters to three famous sets of forged texts from the ninth century in order to parse creative memory: the decretals (papal letters containing judicial opinions) known as Pseudo-Isidore, the histories of the bishops of Le Mans and associated charters and saints' lives known as the Le Mans forgeries, and the collection of secular law known as Benedictus Levita. Each of these productions relates to tensions over claims to jurisdiction and immunities by bishops, kings, and abbots.

All three collections raise questions about the intersections of history, memory, and law. Law is inherently conservative, dependent upon claims to tradition and precedent to protect it against charges of arbitrariness. Legal claims, as Bouchard recognizes, rest on a clear understanding of remembered actions. Unlike the cartularies and *gesta* (stories of the deeds of the selected abbot, bishop, or noble), which can be analyzed in the context of the particular place that curated them, the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals and the capitularies (legal documents divided into chapters) of Benedictus Levita remain unanchored in or as *lieux de mémoire*. They bear the stamp of historicism: the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals are a very deliberately chronological sequence of texts attributed to early popes known from the Liber Pontificalis ("book of the popes"), integrated into a massive, chronologically ordered collection of authentic canon law; the capitulary collection of Benedictus Levita claims to be continuing and completing an earlier compilation of the capitularies of the Frankish kings.

The problem bedeviling anyone trying to work with these sources is that it is hard to see what memories they were intended to conserve or supply and for whom. Bouchard notes the interest in Pseudo-Isidore in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (p. 78), but her claim that "a major proportion of all extant Pseudo-Isidorian manuscripts were copied within two generations of the work's composition" (p. 78) needs modification. The date of Pseudo-Isidore was (once again) cast into the air in 2000, when the late Klaus Zechiel-Eckes proposed that the forgeries were made in the mid-830s, not in the middle of the ninth century as previously supposed and followed by Bouchard (p. 77).[6] Fuhrmann's work on Pseudo-Isidore attracted the attention of the Phantom Time theorists because he drew attention to the delay in Pseudo-Isidore's popularity, and the Phantomists wonder why one would forge a document that had meaning (apparently) only long after its creation. With much greater moderation and rationality, the scholar working most actively at present on the Pseudo-Isidorian corpus, Eric Knibbs, stated: "The earliest manuscripts and the earliest citations of the Pseudo-Isidorian forgeries do not predate 850…. [W]e… have to ask why they were only packaged, circulated and cited years after Louis the Pious's death in 840."[7] In this case, Bouchard seems not to "mind the gap!"   Further, the otherwise careful attention to geographical context seems to lose focus in this chapter.

Nevertheless, Bouchard has advanced analysis of forgeries in general by pointing to the damage done to the guardians of memory by the Carolingians. The disruptions, dislocations, and dispossessions that the Carolingians brought to the monasteries and nobility, at least in the regions of Merovingian dominion, seem to have breached or broken a sense of history.[8] Into that vacuum rushed new ways of filling the past and new causes for filling the past. If those conditions supported unusually bold and exuberant fictions, we should perhaps not be surprised.   Bouchard's idea that such fictions coincided with new status for written claims is intriguing. She points out, "This was a novel concept of property law, that kings themselves could be bound by earlier royal decisions, as long as those decisions were in writing" (p. 66). The power to press such claims, however, competed with the power of the Carolingians to shape the memory of the Merovingian past and their own imperial history, through memory-makers such as Einhard, the Annalist of Metz, and, more circumspectly, Paul the Deacon (chapters six and seven).

By tracing the Arnulfing (soon to be Carolingian) appropriation of church properties, and showing the contrast to Merovingian protection and support for holy places, Bouchard radically revises the chronology and interpretation of early medieval church history, particularly with respect to monasteries

(chapter eight). She concludes that the Carolingians were "a disaster" (p. 128) for a quite healthy Merovingian church and that "the eighth century was a uniquely terrible time for the monasteries" (p. 168). Her well-supported case is built with attention to precarial grants ("temporary" allocations of ecclesiastical property to lay beneficiaries), specific protests voiced in saints' lives and in Boniface's letters, provisions in legal formulae for generic protests against royal seizure of church property, royally commissioned inventories of church holdings, and records of "gifts" (*dona*) made by churches and monasteries to kings. Records of donations *to* monasteries show chronological and regional disparities that Bouchard attributes to the disappearance or absence of professional notaries and municipal archives in the mid-eighth century when the Carolingians came to power (pp. 153,156, 160). Thereafter, Bouchard posits, abbots and monks wrote the charters, and the thread of notarial tradition was severed (pp. 161-162, 230). This explanation may be too absolute: Chris Wickham has suggested that the continued presence of a lay notariate in ninth-century Italy likely extended north of the Alps.[9]

In any case, Bouchard's evidence that Burgundian monasteries formerly supported by Merovingians suffered as the Carolingians gained power, while monasteries in the borderlands of eastern Francia and the Rhineland or closely associated with Charlemagne's family continued to thrive (pp. 169-171, 172, 175), seems compelling. In western Francia, many monasteries failed during the Carolingian period (p. 171). Bouchard connects these patterns to the rise of the episcopate as the key partner for Carolingian rulers, in contrast to the earlier relationships between Merovingian kings and monasteries. Reversing the common story of a debilitated Merovingian church and a Carolingian church infused with royal support permits Bouchard to provide a new, coherent narrative of the origins and development of monasticism prior to the Carolingians.

Perhaps the most exciting section of *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors* is Bouchard's excavation of late antique monasticism in Gaul. Her systematic, careful review of fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-century monastic foundations traces a progression from oratories established by hermits to monasteries founded by bishops or kings and, eventually, by wealthy laity (pp. 195-197 and appendices). This history, however, "was not the story that later monks wanted to hear. They wanted founders, foundation charters, and unbroken histories" (p. 231).   Hence, Bouchard proposes, the forgeries. The real strength, however, of the argument for a supplied past that smoothed over historical transformations with memories consistent with and relevant to the present is in chapter twelve, "Remembering Martyrs and Relics in Sixth-Century Gaul." Here, the missing period of commemoration was not due to forgetfulness or trauma, but to the failure of late antique Christians to be martyred in Gaul. Wonderfully, memories of trauma were created in the sixth century so that monasteries could have suitably worthy patron saints (p. 215). The missing martyrs were located by diligent research and miraculous revelations, and their bones, ashes, and blood given proper housing; their names were inscribed in martyrologies for proper commemoration. The danger of deficient memory was averted. What is fascinating is the investment in local saints: Symphorien of Autun, Germanus of Auxerre, St. Benignus of Langres, Ferreolus of Vienne, Felix of Valence, Marcellus of Chalon (pp. 214-217). Here are the *lieux de mémoire*, monumentalized and imbued with emotion.[10]

Rewriting Saints and Ancestors is a brilliant exposition of crucial problems that span seven centuries. It weaves together complex textual, legal, devotional, and art historical evidence over a sophisticated methodological framework. It keeps both secular and ecclesiastical interests in sight, and thus provides a more holistic view of the period than many studies. Inevitably, the need to explain concisely and coherently such rich and wide-ranging research produces simplification and separation of categories. The distinctions between kings, nobles, monastic clergy, and bishops are rather firmly drawn, and one may wonder to what extent the memories of these "different" groups intersected, coincided, or conflicted. Nevertheless, Bouchard has written a book that makes sense of the inconsistencies, lurches, and lies in the history of the early medieval church in France. And for some of us, this book will help to make sense of our work as historians. We are not masters of the past; we are tourists picking our way through the ruins of memory.

NOTES

[1]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phantom_time_hypothesis.   See   also   Alan   Bellows,
http://www.damninteresting.com/the-phantom-time-hypothesis/, where the comments show a lively
interest in testing the hypothesis with C14 dating methods. I forbear to give addresses for websites for
survivalists and others that veer toward sinister application of the theory, lest readers find their
browsing histories (and possibly more) affected by visiting them.

[2] See, for example, Bellows, op. cit., which closes with the endearing comment, "Granted, most of the
materials regarding this theory are written in German and have not been translated into English, so
there may be more specific arguments for the hypothesis than those available to me. But from what I can
tell, this theory has no basis in fact."

[3] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

[4] Cited in Walter Isaacson, *Einstein: His Life and Universe* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), p.
540.

[5] For a convenient survey, see Patrick Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," *The
History Teacher* 33 (2000): 533-548. Recent scholarship that addresses the question of memory in or
about the Carolingian era includes Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian
Royal Diplomas: the West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012); *Matthew Gabriele, An
Empire of Memory: the Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2011); and Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the
Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[6] Klaus Zechiel-Eckes, "Auf Pseudoisidors Spur, oder: Versuch, einen dichten Schleier zu lüften," in
Wilfried Hartmann and Gerhard Schmitz, eds., *Fortschritt durch Fälschungen? Ursprung, Gestalt und
Wirkungen der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen. Beiträge zum gleichnamigen Symposium an der Universität
Tübingen vom 27. und 28 Juli 2001*, (Hannover: Hahn, 2002), pp. 1-28; idem, "Ein Blick in Pseudoisidors
Werkstatt. Studien zum Entstehungsprozess der falschen Dekretalen. Mit einem exemplarischen
editorischen Anhang (Pseudo-Julius an die orientalischen Bischöfe, JK ✝196)," *Francia* 28, no. 1 (2001):
37-90; and idem, "Zwei Arbeitshandschriften Pseudoisidors (Codd. St. Petersburg F.v.I.11 und Paris
lat.11611)," *Francia* 27, no. 1 (2001, for 2000): 205-210. See now, Karl Ubl and Daniel Ziemann, eds.,
*Fälschung als Mittel der Politik? Pseudoisidor im Licht der neuen Forschung. Gedenkschrift für Klaus
Zechiel-Eckes* (Hannover: Hahn, 2015).

[7] https://sites.google.com/a/yale.edu/decretumgratiani/introduction-to-pseudo-isidore. In an article
prepared after Bouchard's work would have been in press, Knibbs developed a complex solution positing
two separate ateliers working at different times: "The Interpolated Hispana and the Origins of
Pseudo-Isidore," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 99 [130]
(2013):1-71. On the date at which Pseudo-Isidore is first cited, see now Semih Heinen, "Pseudoisidor auf
dem Konzil von Aachen 836," in Ubl and Ziemann, eds., *Fälschung als Mittel der Politik?*, pp. 97-126.

[8] See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26, Special
issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (spring 1989): 7-24: "Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where
memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular moment, a turning point where
consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn
in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of

historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (p. 7).

[9] Chris Wickham, "Land Disputes and Their Social Framework in Lombard-Carolingian Italy, 700–900," in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, eds., *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 105-124, at p. 112.

[10] Bouchard thus adds a new layer to the lieux de mémoire that is not treated in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire*, 3 vols. (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1997). The essay by Antoine Prost ("Les monuments aux morts," vol. 1, pp. 199-223) offers important theoretical foundations and an interesting contrast between "un culte laïque, qui n'a ni dieu ni prêtre" (p. 219) and the religious sites of national memory such as Saint-Denis, described in Bernard Guenée's "Chancelleries et monastères: la mémoire de la France au Moyen Âge" (vol. 1, pp. 587-606), where the memories of the Merovingian and Carolingian past were crafted to provide "cette grande histoire de France que cinq siècles avaient peu à peu construit, où chaque époque avait laissé son sediment reconnaissable, mais où se reflétaient aussi tous les grands thèmes que les Français d'alors voulaient garder en mémoire…" (p. 602). Georges Duby ("Le lignage," vol. 1, pp. 607-624) proposes that after the twelfth century, tombs in local sites were part of a project to secure the memory of aristocratic families (p. 618). Further, André Vauchez ("La cathédrale," vol. 3, pp. 3109-3139) asserts that, in contrast to Italy, the great monasteries of France were effaced from memory between 1730 and 1830 (p. 3109), and that it is the cathedrals of France that support the memory of medieval France. *Rewriting Saints and Ancestors* recovers the memorial meanings of those lost or neglected sites of religious cult.

Abigail Firey
University of Kentucky
afire2@uky.edu