

Máirín Ní Dhoonchadha's contribution "The Semantics of *Banscál*" (1999). The absence of such scholarship from this chapter undermines somewhat the arguments put forward by the author, as she is not in a position to draw upon the significant advances made in the field.

The book is at its strongest when dealing in a granular way with the central texts under investigation. Such concentrated focus has led the author to some interesting conclusions. For example, after a detailed comparative analysis of *Echtrae Chonnlaí* and *Immram Brain* in chapter 3, she poses the following question: "why would sinful mortals be invited to a sinless Otherworld at all, if their sinfulness might mar the innocence of the Otherworld?" (102). This is a question on which a lot of ink has been spilled previously. Her proposal is engaging and deals directly with the issue without getting bogged down in nativist/anti-nativist debates: "The answer would seem to be in the journey—an experience, enhanced in whatever way deemed best by the Otherworld personages involved, which encourages the shift from a sinful to a sinless attitude" (102). Similarly, in chapter 6, after a comprehensive analysis of *Echtrae Nerai* (which should also include reference to Seán Ó Coileáin's article on "*Echtra Nerai* and Its Analogues" [1990]), Key's conclusions with regard to the character of the Morrígain in the tale (175) give additional support to the arguments of A. G. Epstein, i.e., that "rather than acting as a mere trouble-maker, the Morrígain [*sic!*] would seem to be performing her proper function, providing opportunities for the warriors of Ireland—and Cú Chulainn in particular—to fulfill their destinies."

The copyediting from Amsterdam University Press leaves something to be desired, and I have noted a number of printing errors. Among these we might mention *Snechtaí* for *Snechtai* (1); *Éreann* for *Érenn* (1); "and unmarried man" for "an unmarried man" (2); "good for getting a king" for "good for begetting a king" (20); "the ruler the local *síde*" for "the ruler of the local *síde*" (28); "Oengus mac Óic" for "Oengus mac ind Óic" (36); "as its foundations" for "has its foundations" (42); "Stokes, '*Accallam*'" for "Stokes, '*Acallamh*'" (49, 205); "as well as other" for "as well as in other" (102); "mac Roich" for "mac Róich" (161); and "Muirchertach meic Erca" for "Muirchertach Mac Erca" (199). The press's practice of having bibliographies at the end of every chapter which are then brought together in a consolidated bibliography at the conclusion of the volume represents unnecessary duplication of effort. And although we all know the problems involved in keeping academic presses in business, charging €122 for a volume of just over 200 pages seems excessive. The author is not well served by such decisions. Nevertheless, with the publication of this volume alongside the recent collection of essays by Joanne Findon, *Bound and Free: Voices of Mortal and Otherworld Women in Medieval Irish Literature* (2024), we have two new guides to help us engage with this fascinating aspect of the medieval Irish literary corpus.

KEVIN MURRAY, University College Cork

ELEONORA LOMBARDO, *Parole e scritture per costruire un santo: Sant'Antonio dei frati minori nei sermoni medievali (1232–1350)*. (Centro Studi Antoniani 72.) Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2022. Paper. Pp. xiv, 498. €65. ISBN: 978-8-8959-0824-3. doi:10.1086/736377

Continuing the important work of Vergilio Gamboso on hagiographic sources, Eleonora Lombardo has undertaken an extensive study of sermons on Anthony of Padua in the century between his canonization and 1350, where—as José Meirinhos and Luís Amaral write in the preface—"è possibile osservare l'articolata costruzione dell'immagine del santo da parte dei suoi confratelli e di altri membri del clero e l'elaborazione di diversi modi di interpretare le sue virtù" [it is possible to witness the elaborate construction of the saint's image by his brethren and other members of the clergy and the establishment of different ways of interpreting his

*Speculum* 100/4 (October 2025)

virtues] (ii). The volume marks the culmination of an almost ten-year study Lombardo conducted on the sermons dedicated to Saint Anthony, of which she offers a valuable catalogue (307–481), collecting 256 entries identifying all the sermons *de sancto Antonio* uncovered by the author to date: 227 *sermones* and 29 versions deemed significant (i.e., not collatable with the main sermon without losing essential elements for their interpretation).

The majority of the sermons are the work of anonymous authors. However, a small number of texts can be traced back to prominent theologians active in thirteenth-century universities, such as Franciscans John de la Rochelle, Bonaventure, Bertrand de La Tour, Servasanto da Faenza, and Matthew of Acquasparta, or to members of the Hermits of St. Augustine like James of Viterbo and Augustinus of Ancona, or, again, to prominent figures in the ecclesiastical hierarchy such as Odo of Châteauroux or Jacques Fournier.

Through the six chapters preceding the catalogue, Lombardo offers an extensive and reasoned analysis of the entire corpus of the sermons *de sancto Antonio*, examined as both vehicles of his sanctity and an expression of the theological-pastoral development of the Friars Minor. Careful attention to the history of the Order and the broader history of the church and Christian thought underscores her research.

The first chapter offers an overview of the material and the state of the work on homiletics dedicated to the saints and, in particular, to Anthony; the second is devoted to the construction of the entirely ideal link between the Portuguese friar and Francis and the different functions of the two saints in relation to the friars and the clergy at large. The sermons establish the figure of Anthony as a model for the brethren: a “son” of Francis but situated in the shifting reality of the European cities of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and thus called to pastoral care and the assumption of ecclesiastical and university offices.

The third and fourth chapters examine the virtues that best characterize the Minorite way of life: humility, poverty, and obedience. Multiple themes are addressed: the portrayal of these virtues and how Anthony, according to the preachers, had embodied them, becoming a reflection of the life of the friars and the notion of Minorite perfection (the concept of perfection being fundamental in an order that claimed perfect identification between the Rule and the Gospel).

The fifth chapter focuses on knowledge and science, traits which are emphasized to portray Anthony as a preacher and theologian, two roles that are foundational to his holiness, conveyed by a homiletic and hagiographic construction epitomized in the sermons written in university settings. The sermons of university masters frame the image of Anthony as the perfect preacher, profoundly knowledgeable of scripture and committed to the salvific mission for the faithful through the proclamation of the Word of God.

Finally, in the sixth chapter, the author turns her attention to the fourteenth century, when the saint became the symbol of obedience and harmony—perceived as increasingly necessary—among friars and between the Order and the papacy. Fourteenth-century sermons offer a dual image of Anthony. On the one hand, there is the expansion of the theme of the Word and the pairing of “life and word”—typical for the Portuguese saint—to exalt the golden age of the pastoral action of the friars, directed toward the reform and pacification of the *societas christiana*. On the other, there is an attempt by the different currents stirring within the Order to appropriate his image, seeking to make the figure of Anthony a reference for all friars, especially those who, in the convents, were entrusted with teaching and pastoral care.

By reading and comparing such a large number of sermons, collected for the first time in a comprehensive and systematic manner, we glean a new and deeper understanding of the Portuguese saint in which his figure becomes central to overcoming traditional historiographical patterns and clarifying the model of reference for saints devised and disseminated by the friars: in contrast to Francis, Anthony proved more “consistent” with the Order as it evolved rapidly.

Lombardo skillfully examines a complex historical-literary issue, demonstrating her mastery of the extensive international historiography on sermons, sainthood, and Franciscanism. She

firmly anchors herself in the sources and offers a contribution of considerable relevance to knowledge of Saint Anthony, the Order, and the complex historical events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The tremendous work accomplished on the sermons in honor of Anthony will soon culminate in the edition—directed by Lombardo—of a substantial selection of them, scheduled for publication through Fondazione CISAM in Spoleto.

MARIA TERESA DOLSO, Università di Padova

MARY BETH LONG, *Marian Maternity in Late-Medieval England*. (Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture.) Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023. Pp. 304. \$130. ISBN: 978-1-5261-5530-6. doi:10.1086/737733

Mary Beth Long's *Marian Maternity in Late-Medieval England* is a brilliant contribution both to medieval literary studies and more broadly to cultural history, an erudite and compelling exploration of medieval understandings of motherhood, elegantly written and deeply relevant to our own times. Long jettisons the restrictive definition of motherhood predicated on biology to examine medieval representations of motherhood through the lens of contemporary matricentric feminist theory, "noticing maternity where it doesn't announce itself" (262)—in medieval writings on virginity, for example, and in medieval descriptions of mothering practiced by men.

The book consists of three parts, each of which approaches Marian maternity from different but related perspectives. Part 1, "The Reader," examines Margery Kempe's engagement with Marian devotional practices and theologies. Part 2, "The Genre," explores Marian themes in three anthologies of saints' legends: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 114, which includes writings about Marie d'Oignies, Christina Mirabilis, Elizabeth of Spalbeek, and Catherine of Siena; Cambridge University Library, Additional MS 2604, a collection of twenty-two saints' lives made for an East Anglian convent; and London, British Library, MS Arundel 327, an anthology of thirteen of Osbern Bokenham's lives of holy women. Part 3, "The Author," examines the understanding of maternity that emerges from Chaucer's *An ABC*, "The Prioress's Tale," and "The Second Nun's Tale."

Anybody who has read the *Book of Margery Kempe* knows how ostentatiously Kempe imagines herself as intervening in Mary's life—raising her, serving her, conversing with her, traveling with her, comforting her, and so forth. Long shows that a startling competitiveness informs the imagined amiability between Kempe, the aspiring saint, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Kempe, Long argues persuasively, does not simply desire to imitate the Virgin but to *supplant* Mary in her roles as mother and bride of Christ and as an emblem of the church. Long invites us to see a Margery Kempe who is at once "birthing the Church" and staking a claim in current theological debates (72). The emphasis on the lactating Virgin, ubiquitous in the devotional culture of Margery's day, is largely absent in Margery's *Book*, which is "more interested in Mary's role as bodily founder of the church than as physical mother of Christ" (58).

In her chapters on medieval legends, Long eloquently draws out the capacious understandings of motherhood that prevailed during the Middle Ages. These chapters consider those who commissioned and consumed hagiographical anthologies, as well as those who commissioned or produced artwork and textiles that offer alternative interpretations of maternity. Long invites us to see Osbern Bokenham's female patrons as "maternal peers" whose ties with each other were deepened by engaging the local friar to write the lives of their favorite saints. Saints' lives, she shows, represent a spectrum of maternal practices, some performed by men, some by virgins, and many by communities, family, and friends. We must be attentive to what is going on in the background of the saints' stories to detect many of these practices, she shows. Long also points to a tension between clerical authors' tendency to

*Speculum* 100/4 (October 2025)