and the Nature of Love” considers Dante’s treatment of the relationship between human arts and the Bible across the *Eleven*s.

The results of this exploration have enormous implications for Dante Studies as we move into the new millennium. Although the essays focus on the concordances in each set of parallel cantos, the collection is not a mere *Lectura Dantis* tripled up. Rather, the essays function as a harmonious collective, coalescing into a holistic study that reveals the multidimensional character and shape of the *Comedy*.

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Maria Luisa Ardiszone *Reading as the Angels Read: Speculation and Politics in Dante’s Banquet*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. Pp. 454. ISBN 9781442637061

Ardizzone’s *Reading as the Angels Read* is the ideal sequel to her previous *Dante: Il paradigma intellettuale* (Florence: Olschki 2011) and, possibly, one the most exhaustive and wide-ranging commentaries ever written on Dante’s *Convivio*. In *Il paradigma intellettuale*, the author had already guided the reader from the *Vita nuova*’s “poems of praise” to the “poetry of philosophy” of the three *canzoni* in the *Convivio*. What in the *Vita nuova* was still “love poetry” (a minor genre in the eyes of philosophers and theologians) is now being theorized as the highest cognitive endeavor and a stairway to the divine.

Reading as the Angels Read projects the conclusions already reached on a larger scale. The book’s motto is a quote from Augustine’s *Confessions* on how angels read: “For they always behold thy face and read therein ... They are always reading, and what they read never passes away.” The reading of angels is *intelligere*; it is an intellectual vision, an active contemplation that puts the eyes of the mind to use. Ardiszone’s thesis is that Dante appropriates the reading of angels and turns it into a cultural-political project. The *Convivio* “testifies to the birth of an intellectual class not tied to the universities” by highlighting “the celestial contemplation of the angel-intelligences and movers of the heavens as the model that unites contemplation and action” (12). *Voi ch’intendendo ‘l terzo ciel movete* offers the

key to the union of contemplation and action (the angels “understand” the third heaven because they “move” it and they “move” it because they “understand”).

In this light, the allegories in the *Convivio* acquire a deeper significance. The relationship between the “*donna gentile*,” who is one, and the many who love her, is the relationship between a cognitive model and the community of intellectuals who move freely within the city, not constrained by academic or canonical rules and united only by friendship (not nobility or wealth).

Ardizzone points out that Dante is acutely aware that the more human knowledge advances and finds new readers (readers who want to discuss philosophical points in vernacular languages, for instance), the more it comes down to “crumbs” that have fallen from the table of wise men and must be picked up with the hope that as ingredients of a “human bread” they will not be too inferior to the “bread of angels.”

The *Convivio* is Dante’s reminder that the consistency of knowledge is not a given and must be sustained by endless speculation and relentless activity. “Dante writes, therefore, not just with his tradition in ashes ... but also with his contemporary world fated in turn to become dust. He offers and anticipates cultural parameters that his age maybe does not share, does not accept, or is not ready to understand” (16).

With her “political” reading of the *Convivio*, Ardizzone disposes of the persistent view of Dante as a reactionary dreamer of a vanishing empire, or Dante as a defender of theological orthodoxy. What Dante wants to impart is a new sense of learning, in which “cognitive” poetry occupies the center stage. Later, the *Divine Comedy* will put to the test what the *Convivio* theorizes.

Yet Ardizzone acknowledges that there is a gap between the *Convivio* and the *Divine Comedy*. The *donna gentile* remains a clouded figure. As an eternal idea, a separate entity in the mind of God, she connects with the human mind, so to speak, through the highway of love. But how can a mortal creature contemplate an eternal idea? In the thirteenth century, the very thought of such possibility amounted to heresy. Ardizzone shows that Dante, without falling into heresy, nonetheless articulates a slightly unorthodox thinking in the second *canzone*, *Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*. The possibility to contemplate an eternal idea from the point of view of transience is essential to the fulfillment of God’s “human project,” which is the pleasure of contemplation and the achievement of earthly, intellectual happiness, based on the the happiness of angels but independent from it. The community of intellects of the *Convivio* will be reformulated as *universitas*

or *humanitas* in *De monarchia*. The *Convivio* is not so much an interrupted encyclopedia of knowledge as the first attempt to draw the profile of the modern public intellectual. Readers of contemporary theories of the intellectual community (Blanchot, Nancy, Agamben) are advised to set back the clock; they will find an unsuspected forerunner in Dante.

We might add that whereas *Convivio* lays out the groundwork for collective knowledge, in the *Divine Comedy* such community appears as broken, or possibly Dante acknowledges that it never came to being. It survives in the form of friendship (Carlo Martello in *Paradise VIII*). In the end, however, Dante has to face God alone. He thereby fulfills the task he had imposed to himself in the *Convivio*, namely, to demonstrate that men can know God. But the “coming community” of *Convivio* is now restricted to the community of his readers, who may very well be dispersed all over the *universitas* of Christendom. On the other hand, was not the creation of a new reader one of the aims of *Convivio*? “A reader who is educated in the act of reading the work itself” (366). The readers of the *Divine Comedy*, all of them, do form a community, which would not be possible without the project articulated in the *Convivio*.

Philological analyses aside, perhaps no one has ever read the *Convivio* so thoroughly, so obsessively (in a good sense) as Ardizzone did. It will take time to absorb the implications of this book. It leaves no stone unturned, and it is an immense contribution to the field of Dante studies. It also moves us to ask ourselves a question: looking at the crumbs of our civilization, will we ever have a chance to set up a new banquet?

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Marilyn Migiel. *The Ethical Dimension of the Decameron*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. Pp. x + 197. ISBN 9781442631885.

Il dibattito sull'etica del *Decameron* si arricchisce del nuovo e importante lavoro di Marilyn Migiel. Grazie a un'attenta analisi stilistica all'altezza del suo precedente *A Rhetoric of the Decameron*, l'autrice ci invita a leggere il capolavoro di Boccaccio come una costante messa alla prova del sistema di valori di chi legge. In