Extensive notes in early essays. Index of cantos and verses. General index.

PR

Jesse M. Gellrich. *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology, and Fiction*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1985. Pp. 292.

Gellrich defines the medieval "idea of the book" as a "particular form" of the "larger, mythologizing phenomenon of Western tradition" (20). Mythology, in this context, signifies "a specific structure of thought" which informs the encyclopedic and totalizing organization of cultural form. From Saussure, Lévi-Strauss and Foucault comes the seminal concept of the Text fulfilling "certain expectations that mythology supplied in archaic cultures" (18). In Chapter 2, the author examines medieval efforts to contain sacred meaning in structured space (or its mimesis): in architecture, visual art, cartography, and the schematic structure of Scholastic thought and music. In Chapter 3, he chronicles, from Augustine to Aquinas, the ongoing effort to protect signification from indeterminacy, to mythologize the signs of writing and speaking.

In Chapter 1, since "discussions about writing in the middle ages may very well turn out to confront modern deconstruction with its own history" (31), Gellrich places in juxtaposition Derrida's distinction between "writing" (*écriture*) and the conception of the Book as a "natural totality," and Augustine's "distinction between writing and the celestial Book" (which leads to the medieval fascination with "the presence of one in the other," 35). In his chapters on Dante (4) and Chaucer (5-7), the author undertakes what he describes as "a new look at the place of fiction within the encompassing Text of medieval cultural forms" (23). Dante's innovation (which is modest in relation to Chaucer's emphatic "play" with the indeterminacy of the text) consists of his use in the *Commedia* of language as *interpretative* of spiritual experience rather than as *imitative* of the Book of creation or the Book of culture. Gellrich concludes that "the allegories of reading in Dante and Chaucer open the way for rereading" (247).

Extensive bibliography. Index. Nine full-page, black and white illustrations.

CLM

Luciana Giovanetti. *Dante in America: Bibliografia 1965-1980*. Ravenna: Longo, 1987. Pp. 197.

Giovanetti's bibliography of Dante studies in America for the period 1965-1980 bears witness to the varied and widespread interest Dante continues