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


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.


Giovanetti's bibliography of Dante studies in America for the period 1965–1980 bears witness to the varied and widespread interest Dante continues
to generate on this side of the Atlantic. Since many older works on the Italian poet were reprinted during this period, virtually all the protagonists of American Dante criticism from Longfellow on are represented. In the introduction, Giovanetti declares modestly that her bibliography is designed primarily for students (both Italian and American) who are venturing into the field of Dante studies for the first time. However, established scholars will profit from it as a work of consultation as much as students will.

The bibliography is especially useful because the entries (1522 in all) are listed under 13 different headings rather than arranged chronologically. The headings are 1) Concordanze, dizionari, bibliografie; 2) Opere introduttive generali; 3) Volumi collettivi; 4) La vita e i tempi di Dante; 5) La cultura e le fonti di Dante; 6) L’ideologia dantesca; 7) Allegoria e allegorismo; 8) La struttura e le strutture; 9) Arte e tecnica in Dante; 10) Lecturae Dantis; 11) Le epoche dell’esegesi e della fortuna di Dante; 12) Dante nella letteratura comparata; 13) Edizioni e traduzioni.

Each heading is divided under several subheadings. This arrangement has the obvious advantage of clustering together studies on relatively well-defined topics. However, it also gives the uninitiated a sense of the critical issues debated during the 15-year span. Finally, Giovanetti provides a brief but useful introduction to the material contained in each section.

Index of periodicals and of names.


Placing his study of Dante’s *Vita Nuova* outside the theological approach of Singleton and the philological approach of De Robertis, Harrison adopts a phenomenological stance, one which “attempts to go directly ‘to the thing itself’” (4). In the first part of his study (“Beatrice Alive”), Harrison interrogates the nature of the presence of Beatrice; he proposes a correlation “between the body of Beatrice and intendimento, or meaning,” which he claims, “runs implicitly throughout the *Vita Nuova*” (29). Harrison then proceeds to demonstrate the manner in which Dante (in contradistinction to the poetics of Guido Cavalcanti) incorporates, by means of aesthetic transfiguration, the animation of Beatrice’s presence into the new life of his poetry, bringing about an ideal fusion of inspiration and intellection.

The second part (“Beatrice Dead”) demonstrates that the absence of Beatrice leads Dante (after he has resisted a Petrarchan temptation to pursue elegaic lyric) to the discovery of another dimension of time, beyond “the lyric circle of incorporation,” in which the ultimate source of “meaning” attends upon the future. The *Vita Nuova*, Harrison claims, is a testimony of this discovery; it becomes “a story of the genesis of narrative possibility” (94), which is the precondition of epic. Thus the *Vita Nuova*