



Dante's Enigmas: Medieval Scholasticism and Beyond (Variorum Collected Studies Series)

Richard Kay

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Dante's Comedy is a puzzling poem because the author wanted to lead his readers to understanding by engaging their curiosity. While many obscure matters are clarified in the course of the poem itself, others have remained enigmas that have fascinated Dantists for centuries. Over the last thirty-five years, Richard Kay has proposed original solutions to many of these puzzles; these are collected in the present volume. Historical context frames Kay's readings, which relate the poem to such standard sources as the Bible, Aristotle, Aquinas, and the Latin classics, but he also goes beyond these Scholastic sources to exploit Dante's use of less familiar aspects of Latin clerical culture, including physiognomy, Vitruvian proportions, and optics, and most especially astrology. Kay explores new ways to read the Comedy. For instance, he argues that Dante has embedded references to his authorities in a continuous series of acrostics formed by the initial letters of each tercet. Again, he shows how Dante returns to the theme of each infernal canto and develops it in the parallel cantos of Purgatorio and Paradiso. Particularly worthy of note are four essays on the poem's finale in the Empyrean.

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