



# Vision, the Gaze, and the Function of the Senses in "Celestina" (Studies in Romance Literatures)

*James F. Burke*

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The plot of the late-medieval Spanish work *Celestina* (1499) centers on the ill-fated love of Calisto and Melibea and the fascinating character of their intermediary, Celestina. In this ground-breaking rereading of the play, James F. Burke offers a new interpretation of the characters' actions by analyzing medieval theories of perception that would have influenced the composition of *Celestina*.

Drawing upon a variety of texts and thinkers—including the medieval theories of Thomas Aquinas, the Renaissance treatises of Marsilio Ficino, the classical philosophy of Aristotle, and the modern psychology of Jacques Lacan—Burke relates ancient and medieval theories of sensory functions to modern understandings. He demonstrates that modern concepts of "the gaze" have their premodern analogy in the idea of an all-encompassing sensory field, both visual and auditory, that surrounded and enveloped each individual. Touching on medieval theories of the "evil eye," the sonic sphere, and "the banquet of the senses," Burke offers a new perspective on the use and manipulation of sensory input by the characters of *Celestina*.

This book will be welcomed not only by students of Spanish literature but also by those interested in new ways of approaching medieval and Renaissance texts.

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