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## Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England (Hardback)

By Jennifer Bryan

University of Pennsylvania Press, United States, 2007.

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exhortation was increasingly familiar to English men and

women in the two centuries before the Reformation. They

encountered it repeatedly in their devotional books, the

popular guides to spiritual self-improvement that were

reaching an ever-growing readership at the end of the Middle

Ages. But what did it mean to see oneself? What was the nature

of the self to be envisioned, and what eyes and mirrors were

needed to see and know it properly? Looking Inward traces a

complex network of answers to such questions, exploring how

English readers between 1350 and 1550 learned to envision,

examine, and change themselves in the mirrors of devotional

literature. By all accounts, it was the most popular literature of

the period. With literacy on the rise, an outpouring of

translations and adaptations flowed across traditional

boundaries between religious and lay, and between female and

male, audiences. As forms of piety changed, as social

categories became increasingly porous, and as the heart

became an increasingly privileged and contested location, the

growth of devotional reading created a crucial arena...



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